NSW Department of Education



EFSG Part A | 2026r0

Design vision and objectives



Acknowledgement of Country

We recognise the Ongoing Custodians of the lands and waterways where we work and live. We pay respect to Elders past and present as ongoing teachers of knowledge, songlines and stories.

We strive to ensure every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learner in NSW achieves their potential through education.

Artist Credit: Suzanna, a former student from Boggabilla Central School. The artwork featured represents the themes of community, school, friendship and family.

Current version

The current version of the Educational Facilities Standards and Guidelines (EFSG) can be found online through the Department of Education website.

The EFSG has been renamed, so that the name of each version includes the year it was published.

While the current version of the EFSG is generally the authoritative reference, the applicable version for any given project is determined by the date on which the project's business case was approved. It is the responsibility of the user to confirm the relevant applicable version for individual projects or work and to seek clarification where uncertainty exists.

Disclaimer

While every reasonable effort has been made to ensure this document is correct at the time of printing, the State of New South Wales Department of Education, its agents and employees, disclaim any and all liability to any person in respect of anything or the consequences of anything done or omitted to be done in reliance upon the whole or any part of this document.

They accept no liability, including liability for negligence, for any loss,(howsoever caused), damage, injury, expense or cost incurred by any person as a result of assessing, using or relying upon this publication, to the maximum extent permitted by law.

This document is not legal or professional advice. Users must take responsibility for assessing the relevance and accuracy of the information in relation to particular circumstances.

© State of New South Wales through NSW Department of Education, 2026. Information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing and is subject to change. For more information, please visit education.nsw.gov.au/rights-and-accountability/copyright

Document control

Revision number	Date of publication	EFSG version	Description	Updated by	Approved by
2025r0	01/07/2025	EFSG 2025	Issue for publication	RS, LS, SS	MB
2026r0	08/09/2026	EFSG 2026	Issue for publication	DaIS	Portfolio Steering Committee

What is the EFSG?

The Educational Facilities Standards and Guidelines

The Educational Facilities Standards and Guidelines (EFSG) contain design and construction standards for school facilities to support positive teaching and learning outcomes for students, teachers and the community in all schools across New South Wales.

The EFSG is required to be adhered to for the design and delivery of all new work for school facilities in New South Wales. This includes new school facilities as well as upgrades to existing school facilities and the like.

The EFSG adopts a 'live learning' model, and updates will be issued through future annual publications to reflect evolving priorities, sector feedback, and lessons learned.

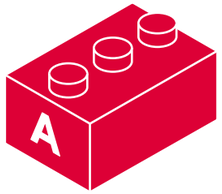
The requirements within the EFSG usually exceed or are in addition to the minimum requirements set out in regulation. The EFSG does not replace the requirement to comply with current applicable regulation, including but not limited to the National Construction Code and Australian Standards.



Click on a brick to navigate to the relevant part of the EFSG.

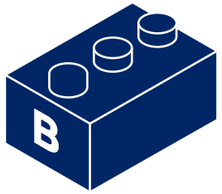
How to use the EFSG

There are four Parts to the EFSG – Part A, Part B, Part C and Part D. Each Part of the EFSG has a specific purpose and is to be read in conjunction with all other Parts.



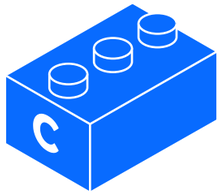
Part A – Design vision and objectives

Part A sets the intention for the design and construction of spaces for school facilities in New South Wales, through the vision and objectives of key design topic areas specific to schools.



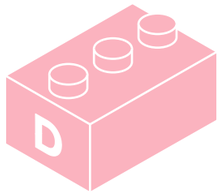
Part B – Pattern Book: Functional design brief

Part B identifies the components and spatial requirements that apply to a school, described in site arrangement diagrams as well as schedules of accommodation and similar.



Part C – Pattern Book: Design components and data sheets

Part C includes drawings of standardised building components for schools. The design components and data sheets within Part C describe spatial layouts, building component details and standardised designs required for schools, with links to a digital library where this information can be downloaded for use.



Part D – Design and technical requirements

Part D contains the written design and technical requirements for building and maintaining school infrastructure facilities. The written technical requirements within Part D describe the components for school facilities that cannot be described in drawings.

Future standards

As content continues to be developed, documents in draft are shared as Future Standards for consultation and stakeholder engagement. This allows for more innovative thinking to be tested, prior to being incorporated and published in Parts A, B C and D as endorsed design standards.

© NSW Department of Education

Related Documents

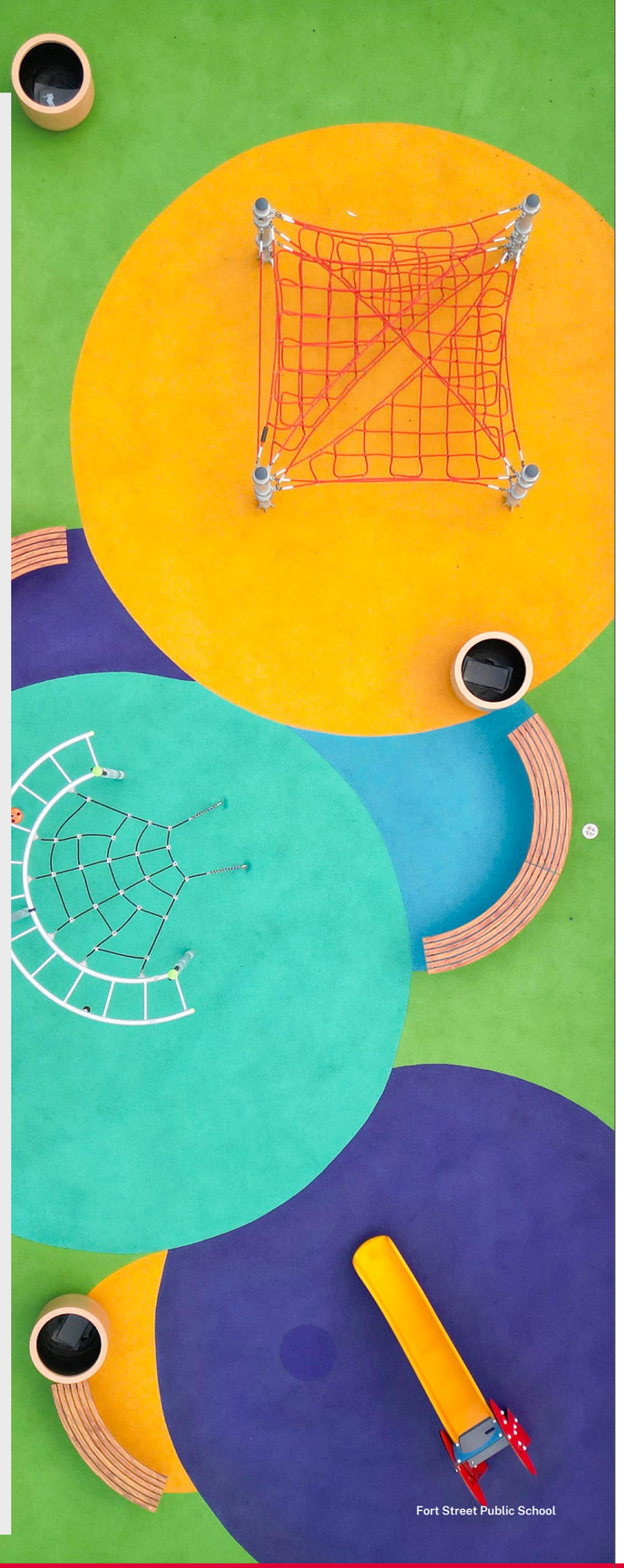
This document is to be read in conjunction with:

- EFSG Part B - Pattern Book: Functional design brief
- EFSG Part C - Pattern Book: Design components and data sheets
- EFSG Part D: Design and technical requirements
- Design Guide for Schools, Government Architect NSW
- National Construction Code (NCC)
- Australian Standards

List of amendments

This list has been developed to assist document users to identify key changes incorporated into EFSG 2026. This list provides a description of major changes only.

Document reference	Change and commentary
Borders and boundaries	The 'Borders and boundaries' design topic has been superseded due to repetition of objective with other design topics.
Early learning facilities	The 'Early learning facilities' design topic has been added.
Policy and framework alignment	An overarching policy context section has been added to 'Introduction'. A policy and framework alignment subsection has been added to each of the design topics.



Fort Street Public School

Contents

Click on a section heading to jump directly to that page

1 Introduction 1

2 Design topics 8

2.1 Standardised design and the Pattern Book 9
2.2 Whole of life 11
2.3 Designing with Country 15
2.4 Heritage 17
2.5 Sustainability 19
2.6 Inclusive design 23
2.7 Supported learning settings for students with disability 25
2.8 Early learning facilities 29
2.9 Site planning and building design 31
2.10 Landscape and open space 35
2.11 Transport, circulation and movement 39
2.12 Sharing school spaces 43
2.13 Technology and communications 45
2.14 Safety in design 47
2.15 Safety and security 49

3 Case studies 51

3.1 Hadla's agriculture spring fair 53
3.2 Eveyln's regional transition 54
3.3 Mateo's exploration in vocational education and training 55
3.4 Isla's tour of the school 56
3.5 Mr Vincent's preschool playground 57

4 Appendix 58

4.1 Transport and Infrastructure SEPP - Design quality principles in schools 59
4.2 References 60

© NSW Department of Education

1 Introduction

This document outlines 15 design topics that ensure NSW public school facilities provide our students with high-quality educational environments now and into the future.

Each design topic detailed within this document includes a vision and objectives that support NSW students to achieve their learning outcomes whilst meeting the functional requirements of educational infrastructure. These design topics work together to ensure learning environments meet the wide range of user and community needs.

Case Studies, which provide examples of how to apply the vision and objectives, can be found in chapter 3.

“Our School Infrastructure meets the needs of a growing population and supports improved student outcomes.”

- Our Plan for NSW Public Education.

Key definitions

- **Design topics** refer to 15 strategic design topics considered when building or upgrading school facilities, ensuring fit for purpose teaching and learning environments. Each design topic has its own vision and objectives.
- **Vision** translates the Department of Education’s strategic requirements into a clear, actionable design goal for School Infrastructure projects, and provides design inspiration through case studies.
- **Objectives** support the vision by providing performance benchmarks and guiding design decisions.
- **Policy and framework alignment** ensures each design topic supports relevant Department of Education and broader NSW Government policies and frameworks by embedding their requirements and intent into the planning and design of our school infrastructure. The policies identified are provided as a guide; it is not necessary to evidence alignment with all the policies and frameworks under each design topic. Additional policies may also apply.

Bellevue Hill Public School

NSW Public School infrastructure - our policy context

This document has been developed in collaboration with subject matter experts across School Infrastructure and the Department of Education. Design visions and objectives have been brought together to align the design of NSW public schools with Department of Education policy and wider NSW government policies and strategies. The following documents overarchingly inform the design and delivery of all NSW public school infrastructure and are embedded throughout the Educational Facilities Standards and Guidelines (EFSG).

- NSW Department of Education Our Plan for NSW Public Education: infrastructure is a key enabler to meeting the strategic goals of the plan, ensuring every student has access to high quality, inclusive, sustainable learning environments at their local public school.
- Government Architect NSW Better Placed - Design Guide for Schools: a best-practice manual to support the delivery of good school design across NSW, promoting excellence in school design processes and outcomes.
- NSW State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure): Chapter 3 of this Policy is designed to facilitate the effective delivery of educational establishments and early education and care facilities across the State.
- NSW State Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2042: a long-term vision and strategic recommendations guiding the delivery of infrastructure across NSW to support community wellbeing, resilience and economic growth.
- NSW Department of Education Asset management policy: direction and guidance ensuring effective, safe, and sustainable management of educational assets to support student learning and wellbeing.
- NSW Department of Education Code of ethics and conduct: duty of care in professional conduct covers a wide variety of matters, including the responsibility to ensure grounds, premises and equipment are safe for employees, students and the general public.



Green Square Public School

NSW Public School students - our educational context

The NSW Department of Education (DoE) is committed to the design of schools to meet the immediate needs of our students, whilst providing adaptability to meet future needs and teaching methods. Every school within NSW provides educational and social spaces to deliver educational environments to support the highest quality academic and social outcomes to enable all our students to thrive.

DoE learning environments are designed to offer teachers and students flexibility in the ways they work and learn together. The design of our learning spaces is based on evidence-based research that supports the highest quality academic and social outcomes for students.

Explicit teaching is the DoE's key teaching method – it happens every day in classrooms across NSW. The eight learning modes below are a set of organising principles that describe different ways in which learning occurs and are part of explicit teaching. These modes of learning inform the design of learning spaces and support users interpreting the features of spaces for teaching and learning.

During learning, these modes support teachers to provide a variety of learning experiences to meet the individual learning needs of students. This offers a way to connect teacher and student actions so they can better understand and use the design features across the school.

The Department's design of learning spaces offers a wide variety of features, including larger and smaller spaces, indoor and outdoor learning environments, shared areas, and specialist spaces. Teachers and students can use the combined features of the space, technology and each other during instruction and other activities.

The placement and configuration of furniture is an example of how learning spaces can be readily reconfigured to enable explicit instruction, focused independent work or collaboration. Students benefit from using a variety of learning modes, and teachers help students navigate and use these spaces to meet learning and individual needs.



Eight modes of learning, scaffolding use of space during learning activities, NSW Department of Education.

Government Architect NSW's design principles

The NSW Government Architect's Design Guide for Schools defines seven design quality principles, expressed as values, to be applied to the design of NSW schools. The 15 design topics described within this document align closely with the Government Architect principles.

An efficient planning framework is in place to assist in the delivery of infrastructure in NSW. This Transport and Infrastructure State Planning Policy (SEPP), together with the 'Design Guide for Schools' promotes design excellence in school design. The 'Design Guide for Schools' provides a primary reference for designers to ensure that the seven design quality principles are applied throughout the design process. The seven principles are outlined below.

Responsive to context

Use a connecting with Country process, consider how the surrounding natural and built environments can be preserved and benefit the experience of users, and enhance positive connections with local communities.

Sustainable, efficient and resilient

Durable and adaptable in an evolving climate – withstanding climate events, heavy use, flexible to respond to future needs, and positively impact on the user's wellbeing. Whole of life considerations must be addressed to reduce maintenance costs, carbon footprint during building and after, and manage the environment such as stormwater and retaining trees and biodiversity.

Accessible and inclusive

Welcoming and easy to navigate, respond to the varied cultural, age and developmental needs of students and adults on site, enhance belonging, and consideration of including co-location of other education services and community access to shared facilities.

Healthy and safe

Enhance wellbeing and healthy lifestyles across indoor and outdoor spaces with movement across the site, active play, shade and fresh air. Ensure a safe environment with sight lines and security systems balanced with maintaining a welcoming and accessible school.

Functional and comfortable

Providing a variety of spaces that are fit for purpose for learning and teaching, as well as enjoyable, comfortable and inclusive. Considerations include future growth of student population, variety of play spaces, and relationships between types of buildings (such as the hall and library) on the school site.

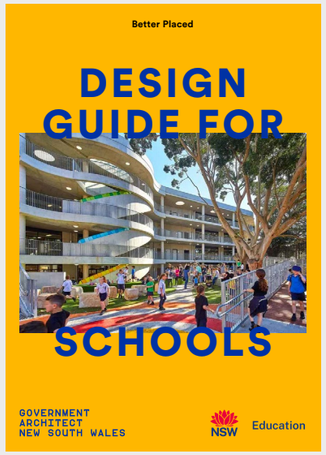
Flexible and adaptable

Potential future needs and a long-term approach must be addressed by the design so that school spaces are multi-purpose and remain fit for purpose over time as teaching approaches or broader needs (such as community, student cohort or climate impacts) change.

Visually appealing

Design which reflects a school's important role in the community, is welcoming and pleasing for users. Considerations include having a positive effect on users, the perspective of very young children in spaces, minimising the visual impact of fencing, use of art, and how it fits in with the surrounding landscape.

Refer to chapter 3, which illustrates DoE's vision & objectives and their alignment to the Government Architects principles.



Click to access the Design Guide for Schools



2

Design topics

2.1 Standardised design and the Pattern Book

The application of a standardised design approach ensures that all new NSW school facilities are equitable, fit-for-purpose, and flexible to support teaching methods and curriculum needs. Standardisation refers to using pre-defined planning templates to design school buildings. These designs are created to meet regulatory, functional, and pedagogical requirements efficiently and cost-effectively.

The Pattern Book, contained within Parts B and C of the EFSG, builds upon the standardised approach to school designs by creating a minimum standard with repeatable design elements and components, which can be applied to new and upgrade schools.

The development of standardised learning hubs reflects research in educational design, offering flexibility for teachers and students in how they teach and learn in a single hub (Dovey and Fisher, 2014). The General learning space hubs (GLSs) are made up of four classrooms and two shared spaces (the multipurpose space and the learning commons). Similarly, Specialist learning hubs are designed to include general learning spaces connected to specialist workshops and multipurpose spaces. The standardised design ensures the mandatory minimum curriculum requirements can be met across all subjects, including a broad spread of elective courses.

The flexibility of the standardised learning hubs supports varied modes of learning in single classrooms and across shared spaces. This ensures that students can transition easily between explicit instruction, independent work, collaboration and reflection.



Melonba Public School

Vision

“To use the opportunities of standardisation with its certainty and repeatable componentry support equity within our schools and enable building high-quality, fit-for-purpose, adaptable schools quickly and efficiently. Using pre-planned and tested systems, ensuring consistency, quality, and flexibility, enabling schools to meet the evolving needs of students and educators.”

Objectives

2.1.1 Adopt standardised design for equality: Adopt standardised school designs to ensure that every child in regional New South Wales has the same quality of education as their metropolitan peers.

2.1.2 Respond to educational needs: Ensure designs are fit for purpose and enable the delivery of mandatory curriculum, including practical components, as well as staffing entitlements.

2.1.3 Flexibility and scalability: Provide locally responsive design appropriate for each school community, that can be easily expanded, reconfigured, or adapted for future educational needs, changes in technology, or enrolment changes with minimal cost.

2.1.4 Provide locally responsive design: Ensure designs are appropriate to the physical and social environment of the school community.

2.1.5 Efficiency in design and construction: Reduce time and costs in planning, design, and construction by reusing pre-approved layouts and specifications

2.1.6 Create activated spaces: Enhance learning by designing spaces that support diverse teaching and learning styles and group sizes.

2.1.7 Ease of maintenance and operation: Use durable materials and standard systems that reduce maintenance costs and complexity.

2.1.8 Consider the whole space: Ensure holistic spatial planning that considers the purpose of every area, functional relationships and interconnection of spaces. Ensure designs consider the interrelationship and use of all spaces.

2.1.9 Design agile learning environments: Balance dedicated and multipurpose learning spaces and use flexible furniture to enable flexibility and allow intuitive and easy rearrangement for different purposes.

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 2.

Policy and framework alignment

- NSW Department of Education Curriculum policy standards
- NSW Department of Education Teacher staffing entitlements
- NSW Department of Education Staffing Agreement 2024-2029
- NSW Education Standards Authority Curriculum requirements (ACE rules)

2.2 Whole of life

This section sets the foundation for applying and implementing Whole of Life thinking to the design of schools.

Whole of life refers to the total cost and performance of an asset across its entire life span from planning and construction to operation, maintenance, and disposal.

This includes not just direct financial costs but also factors such as quality, durability, fitness for purpose, and value for money. This requires consideration beyond initial delivery costs and extends to include ongoing maintenance, refurbishment and replacement impacts. Schools are effective learning environments when they are durable, easy to maintain and can adapt to changing needs and technologies.

Vision

“To design enduring, adaptable, and sustainable school facilities that enhance learning and teaching, support diverse community needs, and provide exceptional value throughout their lifecycle.”



Armidale Secondary College

Objectives

2.2.1 Whole of Life approach: Implement a Whole of Life approach to planning, design, and development, ensuring that school assets and facilities are fit for purpose and offer Value for Money within its lifespan.

2.2.2 Reduce operational costs: Maximise usability of the school asset and facilities and reduce ongoing maintenance and operational costs.

2.2.3 Durable materials: Prioritise durable materials and equipment, with a focus on ease of operation and maintenance and long-term value for money and whole of life costs.

2.2.4 Minimise rework: Minimise rework by considering whole-of-life aspects in design and exploring options to avoid future modifications.

2.2.5 Equal opportunity: Facilitate inclusivity and accessibility ensuring equal opportunities for all students to engage with their learning environments.

2.2.6 Reduce environmental impact: Incorporate ecologically sustainable principles in all aspects of design and operation of school facilities to minimise environmental impact and support long-term resource efficiency.

2.2.7 Flexible: Design spaces to be flexible, supporting evolving pedagogies and technologies, and adaptable for multiple purposes where practical.

2.2.8 Suitable: To be ergonomically suited to the age of the users.

Policy and framework alignment

- Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002
- NSW Treasury TPP 19-07 Asset Management Policy
- NSW Department of Education Asset management policy



Arthur Phillip High School



Jordan Springs Public School

2.3 Designing with Country

Communities benefit from environments that respect Aboriginal custodianship of Country and which respond to Country in their built environments. Undertaking co-design of school environments with Aboriginal cultural knowledge holders enhances the connection all Australians have with place, the natural environment, and fosters culturally responsive and inclusive environments.



Vision

“To create culturally responsive and inclusive school environments that celebrate Aboriginal custodianship of Country and strengthens relationships between schools and local Aboriginal communities. To ensure co-design is meaningfully undertaken with Aboriginal cultural knowledge holders and that Aboriginal communities always provide informed consent for Designing with Country.”

Policy and framework alignment

- NSW Department of Education School Infrastructure Connecting with Country consultation procedure
- Partnership Agreement between the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc. and the NSW Department of Education 2020-2030
- NSW Department of Education Aboriginal education policy
- Government Architect NSW Better Placed: Connecting with Country

Objectives

2.3.1 Connecting with Country: Create school environments that connect with Country, are respectful, and welcoming to the Aboriginal community.

2.3.2 Recognise the material and spiritual connection of Aboriginal people to the land, waters and sky of Country. Acknowledge that Aboriginal people have the right to be recognised by their local and distinct identities.

2.3.3 Commit to a process of equitable and meaningful co-design with Aboriginal cultural knowledge holders to develop school environments that create culturally safe spaces for Aboriginal people, embeds Aboriginal cultural knowledge and truth telling, and celebrate Country for all NSW public schools.

2.3.4 Understand that Designing with Country cannot be commenced without the input of Aboriginal cultural knowledge holders. Understand that Designing with Country cannot be completed until the cultural knowledge holders who have participated in co-design have confirmed and supported the design.

2.3.5 Respect that Aboriginal people have complete ownership of their cultural and intellectual knowledge and have the right to decide how this is shared with others. Understand that Aboriginal cultural knowledge can never be used without the active consent of local Aboriginal cultural knowledge holders.

2.3.6 Uphold the Partnership Agreement with the Aboriginal Educational Consultative Group (AECG) as the Department of Education’s peak Aboriginal community advisory body.

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 5.

2.4 Heritage

Vision

“To celebrate, conserve, protect, use and adapt heritage assets for the benefit of the community and future generations through informed best practice heritage management. Recognising that the heritage values of historical schools is maintained through their continued use as places of learning by ensuring that our heritage places are fit for purpose for modern pedagogy to maintain this heritage significance into the future.”



Armidale Secondary College

Objectives

2.4.1 Understand heritage significance: Understand the history and heritage values of our historic places when adapting them for future use. Be guided by the specific heritage values of that place and informed by heritage subject matter experts.

2.4.2 Conserve heritage significance: Ensure new developments are sympathetic to the heritage significance of existing heritage items and sensitive to the streetscape qualities of heritage conservation areas. Ensure significant fabric is conserved and maintained.

2.4.3 Active use: Maintain active, continued use for historic schools and buildings and that their prominence and contribution to the school’s identity is identified and conserved

2.4.4 Maintain character: Maintain and enhance the historical significance, distinctive character and identity of a place, including its specific history, architectural style and contribution to the streetscape.

2.4.5 Community identity: Design schools that reflect and communicate the unique historic character and local identity of the neighbourhood, fostering a sense of belonging and community pride.

2.4.6 Cautious approach: Take a cautious approach to changing heritage places – do as much as necessary to achieve the project goals but change as little as possible to meet those objectives

2.4.7 Celebrate heritage: Celebrate the heritage significance of school sites as an integral part of the school’s identity and a testament to local or state history.

Policy and framework alignment

- The Burra Charter 2013
- NSW Department of Education Heritage procedure
- NSW Environment and Heritage Assessing heritage significance guidelines
- NSW Environment and Heritage Heritage asset management for state agencies guidelines
- Government Architect NSW Design Guide for Heritage

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 3.

2.5 Sustainability

Schools are central to our communities, providing unique opportunities for students and their families to engage with their local environment and adapt to changing environmental conditions over time. The design of school facilities balances environmental impacts with a school's operational requirements for its local conditions.

An explicit ambition underpinning this approach is to design and develop sustainable building environments, structures and materials that support ongoing improvements in healthy learning and working environments. This ambition drives the integration of sustainability, resilience and wellbeing outcomes across all stages of planning, design and delivery.

Effective school design can actively demonstrate the benefits of environmental, social and wellbeing considerations achieved through good design, including reductions in initial and whole-of-life resource use; cost savings; participation in the circular economy; and climate change adaptation and mitigation.



Vision

“To design school facilities that embody sustainability, flexibility, and resilience, integrating these core principles into every facet of educational infrastructure's lifecycle. By focusing on environmentally and socially responsible and adaptable designs, we aim to create spaces that evolve with the educational needs of current and future generations and a changing climate, while minimising our environmental impact.”

Objectives

Sustainability

2.5.1 Resource efficiency: Minimise the use of energy, water, and other natural resources in construction and operation, through a high performance, airtight and thermally efficient envelope, and highly efficient systems and equipment.

2.5.2 Integrated indoor and outdoor learning environments: Connectivity between high quality indoor and outdoor learning spaces through biophilic design, quality views, and other design elements that promote wellbeing and place specific experiences.

2.5.3 Sets high environmental benchmarks: Design, construction, and facilities in operation, are rated to industry recognised, independently verified, high standards of performance.

2.5.4 High indoor environmental quality: Design regularly occupied spaces with high thermal performance that promote the use of daylight and natural ventilation, and minimise or eliminate indoor pollutants. This minimises the need for artificial lighting and mechanical heating, cooling and ventilation systems, and supports occupant wellbeing.

2.5.5 Climate mitigation: Minimise scope 1, 2, and 3 greenhouse gas emissions through construction material choices, optimisation and standardisation of construction processes, elimination of fossil fuel use, reduced electricity use, installation of renewable electricity generation equipment, reduction of waste to landfill, and installation of facilities to encourage low-emission staff and student commuting.

2.5.6 Circularity of resources: Support a circular economy by first avoiding resource use where possible, then reducing waste generation by prioritising reuse. Where necessary promote recycling and reduce waste to landfill by providing equipment and facilities to implement effective waste management and resource recovery.

2.5.7 Smart control of electric equipment: Implement active, demand-response control systems to provide operational flexibility, manage equipment efficiently, save energy, and reduce emissions.

2.5.8 Environmental preservation: Preserve and enhance natural habitats, biodiversity, and ecosystem services through efforts such as retention of mature vegetation where possible, habitat restoration, green infrastructure, and wildlife corridors. Minimise environmental impacts on surrounding environments from noise, lighting, litter, olfactory and other forms of pollution.

Resilience and adaptability

2.5.9 Community resilience: Design school spaces that can be used by the entire community, increasing efficiency and fostering stronger connections, which enhances overall resilience of the community.

2.5.10 Flexible and durable facilities: Build robust facilities that can easily adapt to changing educational needs and environmental conditions, reducing the need to demolish and rebuild.

2.5.11 Preparedness for hazards: Ensure schools are built to withstand natural and urban hazards and shocks and can adapt to long-term climate change stresses and impacts, reducing disruptions and repair costs.

Policy and framework alignment

- NSW Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023
- NSW State Environmental Planning Policy (Sustainable Buildings) 2022
- NSW Biodiversity Offsets Policy for Major Projects 2014
- NSW Government Net Zero Government Operations Policy 2024
- NSW Government Decarbonising Infrastructure Delivery Policy 2024
- NSW Government Circular Economy Policy Statement 2019
- NSW Department of Education Our Commitment to Sustainability 2024
- NSW Department of Education Net Zero Roadmap 2025
- NSW Rural Fire Service Planning for Bush Fire Protection 2019
- NSW Department of Planning and Environment Flood Risk Management Manual 2023
- Department of Education Flood Impact Assessment Guideline

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 3.



Speers Point Public School

2.6 Inclusive design

Inclusive design enables all staff, students and parents or carers to authentically participate and belong within their school environment. Inclusive design is not limited to the functionality of spaces and the proactive removal of barriers, it ensures dignity, independence and equity for all.

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 4.



Lucas Gardens School

Vision

To design and build schools that enable inclusivity, equity and dignity, supporting the operationalisation of inclusive practices, creating a strong sense of belonging.

Objectives

2.6.1 New and upgraded infrastructure is fit for purpose: Infrastructure supports the rights of students with disabilities to enrol and participate in NSW schools on the same basis as students without disabilities.

2.6.2 Reduced reliance on integration funding over time: The provision of more inclusive infrastructure over time will reduce the need for integration projects to address infrastructure limitations in the future as buildings age, by considering longevity and potential future needs of occupants.

2.6.3 Everyone feels they belong within their local school community: Students feel confident, safe and emotionally connected to their built environment and are not impeded or excluded by the infrastructure.

2.6.4 Students with disability are best able to meet their full potential: Infrastructure provision enables equity, dignity and maximises potential for independence for all users, providing occupants with the infrastructure supports needed to participate in learning equally.

2.6.5 School Infrastructure work as effective and meaningful allies: Responsibility for increasing awareness of bias and implementing inclusive design is shared by all employees and demonstrated through building well considered, functional, innovative and inclusive infrastructure.

2.6.6 Infrastructure is not a barrier to employment: People with disability can authentically and meaningfully access employment in a range of school settings through the provision of inclusive staff spaces and amenities.

Policy and framework alignment

- NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014
- NSW Department of Communities and Justice Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026-2029
- NSW Government Response to the Disability Royal Commission
- NSW Department of Education Inclusive education for students with disability policy
- NSW Department of Education Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy 2023-26
- NSW Department of Education Workforce diversity and inclusion standards
- NSW Department of Education Workplace adjustments procedure
- NSW Department of Education Detention and time out procedures
- NSW Department of Education Personalised learning and support procedures
- NSW Department of Education Staff Wellbeing Strategy 2024-27
- NSW Department of Education Child Safe Standards
- NSW Department of Education The care continuum

2.7

Supported learning settings for students with disability

Supported learning settings offer students with diverse and complex needs a learning environment with smaller class sizes, personalised support, and a more flexible approach to learning. These settings are in mainstream schools and schools for specific purposes. The design of these settings means students' learning is supported by infrastructure, equipment, technology, and specialist staff ensuring appropriate learning adjustments and targeted support occurs for successful transition to post-school further study and employment.



Vision

"To design and build supported learning settings where all students have access to the full curriculum and thrive in a fit for purpose environment, while forming meaningful connections to peers and community as life-long learners."

Objectives

Supported learning classes

2.7.1 Design reinforces students are full participating members of the student cohort: Design supports meaningful participation and connection to mainstream settings, to support a sense of belonging and, foster inclusion.

2.7.2 Design to reflect mainstream settings: Supporting transition to and from supported learning classes to mainstream, providing familiarity and equity in provision.

2.7.3 Support equitable, dignified and safe transitions to, from and on site: Provide choice and flexibility in master planning and design to accommodate a variety of needs and preferences.

2.7.4 Provide opportunity for integrated play and social activity: Encourage development of social skills and interaction with peers where appropriate, to develop a sense of belonging, while supporting the diverse needs of students.

2.7.5 Provide convenient, independent and dignified access to a choice of sanitary facilities: Considering needs of a wide range of occupants to ensure safe access to appropriate sanitary facilities are not a barrier to school attendance.

2.7.6 Provide passive and active supervision to maximise student independence while maintaining safety: Key lines of sight enable staff to supervise.

© NSW Department of Education

Schools for specific purposes (SSP)

2.7.7 Demonstrate inclusive design practices at all stages: All needs and strengths are included and welcomed. Infrastructure should support change, choice and progress and enable authentic and meaningful participation in learning. The design should enable unconditional positive regard, trusting that students can develop new skills, whether they be academic or regulation, to increase their agency.

2.7.8 Focus on achieving outcomes: Learning growth, wellbeing, and independence are fostered in all school spaces. SSP design should provide students with access to a curriculum that meets their needs, independence goals, educational outcomes, and aspirations.

2.7.9 Reflect any other school: Eliminate isolated and unique design, demonstrate likeness to other schools. SSPs should look and feel like a mainstream school, so that students can participate in their education on the same basis as all NSW students, while still offering student specialist support to support successful learning.

2.7.10 Reflect the cohort: Adapt to the needs and strengths of the student group and allow for change. SSPs need to balance the diverse needs of the cohort, as those needs change over time, with a variety of types of learning and regulation spaces, guiding students to readiness to learn.

2.7.11 Embed safety in design: Provide key safety in learning spaces to all students and staff that balances user requirements and operations. SSPs should be designed carefully to reduce high risk student behaviours and the impact of lockdowns on learning, whilst drawing on trauma-informed practices and design.

2.7.12 Promote staff wellbeing: Design enables staff to effectively undertake their work, and provides supportive spaces to allow staff to rest and recover, and positively promote wellbeing. SSP design should proactively contribute to staff wellbeing ensuring staff feel welcome, safe and valued through the provision of adequate and fit for purpose facilities.

Policy and framework alignment

- NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014
- NSW Department of Communities and Justice Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026-2029
- NSW Government Response to the Disability Royal Commission
- NSW Department of Education Inclusive education for students with disability policy
- NSW Department of Education Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy 2023-26
- NSW Department of Education Detention and time out procedures
- NSW Department of Education Personalised learning and support procedures
- NSW Department of Education Staff Wellbeing Strategy 2024-27
- NSW Department of Education Child Safe Standards
- NSW Department of Education The care continuum
- NSW Department of Education Curriculum policy standards

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 4.



Tirriwirri School



2.8 Early learning facilities

Early childhood education environments play a vital role in fostering children's development through engaging, play-based learning experiences. The design of early learning facilities balances safety and inspiration to create spaces where children feel secure, supported, and motivated to explore. Thoughtful consideration of these environments enhances early learning outcomes, supports social connection, and nurtures a strong sense of belonging within the wider school and community.



Vision

"To design early childhood environments that offer vibrant opportunities for play, exploration, and social development, supporting every child's journey as a capable and confident lifelong learner."

Policy and framework alignment

- NSW Department of Education School Infrastructure Preschool Design Brief
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority National Quality Framework
- NSW Government Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- NSW Government Child Care Planning Guideline 2021

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 5.

Objectives

2.8.1 Welcoming and Safe: The environment reflects, respects, and affirms the identities of children and families and makes all feel welcome. It promotes conversations and connection between children, educators, families, and the broader community. The environment facilitates opportunities for children to participate in everyday life, develop interests and construct their own identities and understandings of the world.

2.8.2 Connected with Community: Spaces facilitate a sense of connection and belonging to the primary school community to enable a smooth transition into schooling. The environment promotes sharing of space with the wider community and flexibility of use after-hours where possible. Spaces are responsive to the culture, languages, and history of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community.

2.8.3 Played-Based Learning Environments: The indoor and outdoor environments promote and support different types of play for children's active engagement, agency, problem solving, curiosity, creativity, and exploration. The learning environment allows for quiet, active, and messy play zones. The environment should provide opportunities for risk taking and challenge.

2.8.4 Inclusive Learning Environment: The environment is designed for children of all abilities, accommodating a child's scale, low line of sight, curiosity and heightened sensory perceptions. The environment is flexible in use to cater for different interests, preferences, abilities and learning styles of all children. Indoor and outdoor spaces are thoughtfully designed using simple, intuitive layouts to accommodate diverse sensory abilities and physical needs.

2.8.5 Connected with the Environment: The indoor and outdoor environments are designed to foster hope, wonder and knowledge about the natural world. The learning environment promotes children's understanding about their responsibility to care for the natural world. The indoor learning and play spaces utilise biophilic design to enhance children's health and wellbeing. A building design responds to the natural environment using natural material and sustainable building principles.

2.9 Site planning and building design

Schools bring benefits to whole communities, providing a welcoming social anchor within a neighbourhood. The planning and design of school buildings and outdoor spaces should consider the surrounding context, the topography and environmental features of the site and how families access the school site, during and after school, to ensure that the school is welcoming and appropriate to its surrounding built environment.

Vision

“Schools bring benefits to whole communities, providing a welcoming social anchor within a neighbourhood. The planning and design of school buildings and outdoor spaces should consider the surrounding context, the topography and environmental features of the site and how families access the school site, during and after school, to ensure that the school is welcoming and appropriate to its surrounding built environment.”



Concord High School

Objectives

Site planning

2.9.1 Create welcoming school environments: Design schools with welcoming and generous entrances that foster a sense of belonging and community connection, featuring clear street addresses, distinctive character, and inviting frontages to create a positive learning atmosphere.

2.9.2 Integrate with surroundings: Sympathetically integrate schools into the neighbourhood, leveraging existing landscape features and microclimate to maximise natural amenities and provide shading to play space and communal areas.

2.9.3 Contribute to streetscape: Enhance the public realm by improving streetscape and character and celebrate heritage and local history where applicable.

2.9.4 Ensure site safety: Provide safe and direct walking and cycling routes, clear wayfinding, and well-located entry points with safe access for vehicles and pedestrians. Site selection and planning must also consider air quality, noise, vibration, and the appropriateness of surrounding land uses to protect the health and wellbeing of children.

2.9.5 Protecting biodiversity: Ensure the site selection and building design are sensitive to land that contains state and commonwealth listed threatened species and their habitats and other sensitive areas.

2.9.6 Promote open spaces: Use planting, landscape elements, and fencing to create open spaces that contribute to the public domain and provide easily supervised areas for all age groups.

2.9.7 Support community use: Design flexible school facilities that are accessible for community use outside of school hours, supporting collaboration and shared infrastructure initiatives with local partners.

2.9.8 Minimise neighbour impact: Reduce the impact on neighbouring properties by considering overshadowing, scale, overlooking and built form character. Siting of built form must also consider the impacts of changing flood levels on surrounding properties and the environment.

2.9.9 Foster community and student well-being: Create opportunities for social interaction within new school developments.

Built form and scale

2.9.10 Visual quality and coherence: Ensure that new developments contribute positively to the visual quality of the built environment, with a focus on architectural merit and aesthetic coherence.

2.9.11 Harmonisation with surroundings: Design buildings that harmonise with their surroundings, considering scale, massing, and materials that respect and enhance the local context.

2.9.12 Conserve heritage significance: Ensure new developments are sympathetic to the heritage significance of existing heritage items and sensitive to the streetscape qualities of heritage conservation areas. Ensure significant fabric is conserved and maintained.

2.9.13 Maintain character: Maintain and enhance the historical significance, distinctive character and identity of a place, including its specific history, architectural style and contribution to the streetscape.

2.9.14 Child centred design: Design building forms and spaces that prioritise children's needs by designing for their scale, movement, sensory experience and well-being.

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 1.

© NSW Department of Education

Policy and framework alignment

- NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure Guidelines for Division 5.1 assessments 2026
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Resilience and Hazards) 2021
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021



Bangalow Public School

2.10 Landscape and open space

Outdoor play and access to landscaped area provides social and educational benefits. Effective landscape design provides a variety of safe and inclusive outdoor spaces that support student learning, play, social, connection to their peers, with nature and to Country.



Bangalow Public School

Vision

To create high-quality open spaces in NSW public schools that serve as vibrant community hubs, fostering learning, sustainability, and a strong connection to Country and local communities. We aim for these spaces to support harmonious coexistence with the environment and provide safe, engaging play spaces that promote physical development and recreation for students and the broader community.

Objectives

Landscape quality

2.10.1 Integration of design: Incorporate landscape design into school developments to enhance on-site amenities, contribute positively to the streetscape, and mitigate negative impacts on neighbouring sites.

2.10.2 Site conditions: Utilise natural site elements such as existing trees and mature vegetation, topography, orientation, and climate to inform the spatial organisation of buildings and landscape areas, particularly for future school expansion and demountable staging.

2.10.3 Culturally responsive design: Create landscape designs that allows for flexible gathering spaces, reflect the cultural values and needs of the community.

2.10.4 High-standard design: Promote fit-for purpose, high standard landscape designs across all school sites that increase amenity and support school operations.

2.10.5 Environmental preservation: Preserve and enhance natural habitats, biodiversity, and ecosystem services through efforts such as retention of mature vegetation where possible, habitat restoration, green infrastructure, and wildlife corridors.

2.10.6 Planting and fencing: Encourage planting and fencing that opens up existing vistas and views, contributing positively to the streetscape and character of the public domain.

2.10.7 Shade and comfort: Provide adequate shade and weather protection through tree canopy coverage and fixed structures to ensure outdoor spaces can be used comfortably by students year-round.

Environmental considerations

2.10.8 Heat island effect: Promote impervious surfaces, natural materials and canopy where possible to reduce the heat island effect across school sites.

2.10.9 Tree canopy expansion: Optimise existing usable shade space and increase tree canopy coverage where needed to provide natural shading and cooling for outdoor spaces, and provide environmental benefits.

2.10.10 High natural capital: Prioritise the planting of locally native plant species and enhancement of natural features, that provide habitats for native animals.

2.10.11 Deep soil zones: Facilitate tree canopy growth and manage rain and stormwater through deep soil zones, allowing for better water infiltration and overland flow management.

2.10.12 Preserve natural habitats: Preserve and enhance natural biodiversity and ecosystem services in and around school developments, using measures such as regenerative landscape design,habitat restoration, green infrastructure, and wildlife corridors.

2.10.13 Water sensitive design: Design water systems that follow the topography of the site and explore opportunities to reuse water, reduce flooding and maximise natural irrigation of the school site.

Policy and framework alignment

- Government Architect NSW Biodiversity in Place Framework
- NSW Department of Education Sport and physical activity policy
- Cancer Council NSW Guidelines to Shade: A practical guide to shade planning in NSW
- NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure Synthetic turf sports fields in public open space – Guideline for decision-makers

Outdoor learning and play spaces

2.10.14 Natural and joyful play spaces: Create natural, joyful, and inspiring play and recreation areas that are specifically designed to meet the developmental needs of students.

2.10.15 Diverse play and learning opportunities: Provide a wide range of play and learning opportunities to cater to different types of play and to engage students of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

2.10.16 Safe and inclusive spaces: Ensure that all outdoor spaces are designed to be safe and accessible for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. Outdoor spaces should offer adequate shading in the form of natural tree canopy cover or fixed shade structures.

2.10.17 Supervision-friendly design: Provide open spaces that are easy to supervise and appropriate for use by various age groups, enhancing safety and visibility.

2.10.18 Turfed outdoor spaces: Outdoor spaces must prioritise natural and permeable ground surfaces that support safe, fit-for-purpose, climate-responsive learning and play. Natural turf is the preferred turf surface in schools. Synthetic turf shall only be considered where there is an operational need for a turfed surface, the required level of use cannot reasonably be accommodated by another material, and environmental and health impacts can be appropriately mitigated.

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 5.



2.11 Transport, circulation and movement

Connecting a school to the local transport networks ensures safe, efficient and sustainable travel to school and includes all modes of transport including pedestrians, cyclists, public transport options and cars. Movement to and within a school is influenced by external road conditions and site conditions and opportunities to provide welcoming pedestrian entrances connecting a school with its community.



Vision

“To create a safe, efficient, and sustainable transport network that prioritises active and public transport, enhances community connectivity, and fosters a healthy and accessible environment for all students and staff.”

Objectives

2.11.1 Sustainable and efficient transport: Ensure efficient transport to and from schools, minimising travel time and costs while promoting sustainable modes such as walking, cycling, and public transport.

2.11.2 Active transport promotion: Encourage students to use active transport options like walking and cycling to reduce reliance on private vehicles and promote healthy lifestyles

2.11.3 Connectivity and liveability: Improve school design and enabling infrastructure to enhance connectivity and liveability, supporting safe and convenient access for all users

2.11.4 Collaboration: During all steps of the lifecycle, if relevant, actively engage with TfNSW and Council around the impacts of the project on the local and wider transport network, particularly around buses and active transport

Active transport

2.11.5 Accessibility: Ensure barrier-free access for all users, including those with disabilities, seniors, and families with strollers, by providing adequate pathways, ramps, kerb ramps, crossing facilities, and clear signage.

2.11.6 Pedestrian safety: Prioritise pedestrian movement and safety over vehicular traffic within the school grounds and in the immediate vicinity of the school site to encourage active transport options and reduce potential conflicts.

2.11.7 Community impact: Minimise disruption to the surrounding community caused by student arrivals and departures by designing safe and efficient pedestrian routes.

2.11.8 Bike and scooter parking: Provide parking for bicycles and scooters in line with the mode share targets in the Transport Assessment, and in a paved area with weather protection that is adjacent to a bike accessible school entry within the school secure fence line. Spatial allocation and position should allow for potential future expansion and flexibility.

2.11.9 End of trip facilities: Provide end of trip facilities for staff within school sites in line with Green Star requirements.

Public transport

2.11.10 Location of schools: Consider road design, the ability of roads to accommodate buses, and proximity and access to railway stations. The design may require suitable bus infrastructure, including indented bus bays and shelters, in consultation with transport stakeholders such as TfNSW and the local council.

2.11.11 Bus access: Ensure safe and efficient access to bus services for staff, students, and families at the school frontage, considering the need for bus stop pairs for bi-directional services where applicable.

Vehicular movement

2.11.12 Traffic management: Optimise vehicular traffic flow to minimise congestion, delays, queuing and conflicts with pedestrians, especially during peak school hours.

2.11.13 Safety measures: Implement vehicle risk mitigation strategies such as separating vehicle and pedestrian zones, reducing vehicle speeds, and addressing potential risks to students walking to school or bus stops.

2.11.14 Loading and services: Provide adequate areas on-site to accommodate activities associated with delivery, service and emergency vehicles and facilitate vehicle movement in forward-in and forward-out direction.

2.11.15 On-site parking: Provide limited staff car parking provisions on school sites to promote the use of active transport and public transport options.

2.11.16 Site-specific parking solutions: Provide adequate off-street parking based on site-specific characteristics and surrounding context, taking into account proximity to public transport and available active transport infrastructure.

Drop-off and pick-up zones

2.11.17 Efficient flow: Design drop-off and pick-up areas on the school side of a street to support smooth traffic flow, reducing congestion and conflicts with pedestrians.

2.11.18 Facilities provision: Provide safe drop-off and pick-up facilities for students using private vehicles, aligned with the findings of the Transport Assessment and discussion with Transport Stakeholders (TfNSW and Council).

Policy and framework alignment

- Transport for NSW Movement and Place policy
- NSW State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021
- NSW Government Net Zero Government Operations Policy 2024
- NSW Government Decarbonising Infrastructure Delivery Policy 2024
- NSW Government 2026 Road Safety Action Plan

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 4.



Nirimba Fields Public School

2.12 Sharing school spaces

Sharing our schools enhances wellbeing outcomes for our wider local communities by providing opportunities for positive social and physical interactions through either joint use or shared use of school facilities during and after school hours. Sharing spaces aligns with wider planning policies focussing on providing access to open play space and playing fields.

Vision

“To foster vibrant, connected communities through the innovative and shared use of school spaces, enhancing educational outcomes and community wellbeing.”

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 1.



St Ives Indoor Sports Centre

Objectives

Collaboration opportunities

2.12.1 Authentic relationships: Build authentic relationships with community partners to co-design and develop shared facilities that meet the diverse needs of students and the wider community.

2.12.2 Higher quality facilities: Provide students with access to higher-quality facilities and a broader range of services and activities through shared agreements.

2.12.3 Versatile spaces: Support the development of versatile spaces that can be adapted to meet the evolving needs of both the school and the community, enhancing resilience and future-proofing infrastructure.

Integrated community access

2.12.4 Community connections: Enhance community connections by integrating school spaces with local amenities, such as recreation, health services, higher education, and transport.

2.12.5 Multipurpose spaces: Design multipurpose spaces that support both school and community activities, promoting greater community engagement and use outside school hours.

2.12.6 School as public places: Celebrate Country and diversity by creating a public place with versatile school facilities that can be shared with the community, catering to activities beyond school hours.

Policy and framework alignment

- NSW Department of Education Sharing of School Facilities Policy
- NSW Department of Education Sharing of School Facilities Procedures

2.13 Technology and communications

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems are designed to support schools by enabling anywhere and anytime access to technological systems, supporting learning, teaching, and school operations. ICT systems are designed to be flexible and future-proofed to accommodate innovation, changing pedagogy and student needs over time.

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 2.



Vision

“To provide seamless, adaptable, and future-ready technology that enhances learning and supports school operations. By ensuring easy access to ICT throughout learning spaces, students can learn and connect anytime, anywhere. The technology is designed to evolve, allowing new tools to be added and easily maintained over time.”

Objectives

Seamless ICT access and integration

2.13.1 Seamless ICT access: Ensure seamless access to information and communication technology (ICT) throughout learning spaces, enabling learning and connection anywhere, anytime.

2.13.2 Support school operations: Provide access to building performance data, such as energy and water use, to support the efficient and effective operation and use of school buildings.

Adaptability of technology

2.13.3 Evolving technology use: Technology evolves over time, as does its role in education. ICT should be deployed with flexibility in mind, ensuring that various technologies can be introduced or expanded in school spaces.

2.13.4 Future-proofing ICT deployment: Careful consideration should be given to deploying ICT in a way that ensures it operates seamlessly despite future changes in the learning environment, including the introduction of new technologies or expansion of existing ones.

Serviceability and durability

2.13.5 Serviceability: ICT infrastructure should be designed for easy replacement, repair, removal, and upgrading. This allows for flexibility and future changes, ensuring minimal disruption to the learning environment.

2.13.6 Durability: ICT systems should be installed to minimise exposure to weather, wildlife, or accidental damage, extending their lifespan and reducing maintenance needs.

Infrastructure as a learning tool

2.13.7 Educational value of building design: Utilise data from buildings and operational technology as educational tools, allowing students to learn from their surroundings and better understand the technology and infrastructure in place.

Resource efficiency

2.13.8 Flexible: Design spaces to be flexible, supporting evolving pedagogies and technologies, and adaptable for multiple purposes where practical.

2.13.9 Suitable: To be ergonomically suited to the age of the users

Policy and framework alignment

- NSW Department of Education Technology in schools policy
- NSW Department of Education Technology in schools procedures
- NSW Digital Strategy

2.14 Safety in design

The robust nature of the school environment as learning and play spaces requires a balance of safety through the design of facilities with risk management to deliver fit for purpose, safe and enjoyable school environments. Embedding safety in the design of schools enhances people's sense of belonging, is inclusive of people with all abilities and enables all school users to feel safe in how they use their schools.



Vision

"To create school environments that are safe, accessible, and welcoming to all individuals. A focus on spaces that are equitable and inclusive promote diversity, foster a sense of belonging, and supporting learning and wellbeing. By implementing comprehensive security systems and proactive safety measures, we aim to provide stable, secure and uninterrupted learning environments for students and the school community."

To see an example of how this vision and objectives might be implemented, click here for case study 5.

Objectives

2.14.1 Risk management: Eliminate and minimise risks early and throughout the life of the asset to reduce potential harm and increase efficiency, in line with the 'reasonably practicable' principle to protect people from harm under the NSW Work Health and Safety Act 2011.

2.14.2 Stakeholder engagement: Effective stakeholder engagement during the project lifecycle that creates opportunities for meaningful consultation and continuous improvement.

2.14.3 Safe access: Design buildings and surrounding areas to be accessible and safe for everyone, supporting an inclusive and secure environment.

2.14.4 Best practice: Make sure all design and construction work meet legal requirements and safety standards, while balancing functionality, appearance, and cost.

2.14.5 Optimise health safety and wellbeing: Implement safety in design strategies that protect the health, safety and wellbeing of all users, promoting high-quality indoor and outdoor environmental quality, while enhancing asset usability and performance. This includes design considerations regarding security measures and emergency protocols.

2.14.6 Promote wellbeing through design: Create environments that enhance the physical and emotional wellbeing of students and staff by integrating natural light, ventilation, and green spaces, while prioritising landscape design to support outdoor activities and overall wellbeing.

Policy and framework alignment

- NSW Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- NSW Work Health and Safety Regulation 2025
- NSW Department of Education Work health and safety policy
- NSW Department of Education Student health and wellbeing policy

2.15 Safety and security

Ensuring the safety of all students, staff and visitors to NSW school and the protection of school assets through design and using proactive prevention and effective security systems (digital and physical).

Vision

“To create safe learning environments through comprehensive and holistic school security design solutions, providing proactive threat prevention and emergency preparedness.”

Objectives

2.15.1 Safety of students, staff, and the community: Ensuring the safety of students, staff, and the community is the primary focus of schools. This includes safeguarding property and assets as a key component of this objective.

2.15.2 Maintaining school site integrity: Protect the school site from external threats by clearly defining physical boundaries and property lines. Secure and well-maintained school sites enhance safety and deter unauthorised access.

2.15.3 Comprehensive security design: Implement a comprehensive, multilayered security approach for all schools, including physical barriers, intruder alarms, CCTV, and electronic access control. This ensures that if one security measure fails, others are in place to mitigate risks and maintain safety.

2.15.4 Proactive threat prevention: Anticipate potential threats and implement measures to prevent them before they occur. Security infrastructure must be adaptable to support current and future needs, allowing for changes with minimal impact on existing services and users.

2.15.5 Safety by design: Enhance school safety by incorporating Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles into the design. This approach maximises visibility, controls access, fosters a sense of ownership, and ensures ongoing upkeep to create secure, welcoming and well-maintained school environments.

Policy and framework alignment

- NSW Department of Education Work health and safety policy
- NSW Department of Education Student health and wellbeing policy
- NSW Police Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) guidelines



Carlingford West Public School

3

Case studies

These case studies are examples of how visions and objectives might be implemented by designers, teachers and students in typical school settings.

Darcy Road Public School

3.1

Hadla’s agriculture spring fair

Hadla, a year 3 student, is excitedly preparing for her school’s Agriculture Spring Fair. She and her classmates are working with their teacher to set up the school hall and adjacent Covered Outdoor Learning Area (COLA). The fair will showcase a project that connects her class with the local museum, highlighting how school buildings and educational practices have evolved over the school’s 100-year history. The students investigated past extracurricular activities, such as public speaking, sporting events, and even chicken breeding, to understand the role the school has played in their community.

At the heart of our School Infrastructure design vision is the belief that every student deserves access to learning environments that support their individual needs and experience of success. This belief is reflected in the experiences of students, such as Hadla in our case study, showing how carefully designed learning spaces can foster academic growth, collaboration, and engagement, while supporting their unique journeys.

Hadla’s experience shows:

- Her experience in flexible indoor and outdoor environments collaborating with peers and with community.
- Using the school hall and COLA for the Agriculture Spring Fair shows how school spaces can be shared with the local community.
- Collaboration with the local museum provides hands-on learning that extends beyond the classroom.
- It allows her to have ownership and pride over her work as well as experiencing a strong connection between her and the community.

This case study illustrates how our designs enable schools to be at the centre of their local communities, with the physical infrastructure of schools bringing people together, supporting Our Plan for NSW Public Education.



3.2

Evelyn’s regional transition

Evelyn is a new student at a regional school, having recently transferred from a metropolitan school. Despite the change in location, Evelyn feels at ease navigating the learning spaces thanks to the standardised design of her new school. She and her classmates are working on a multimedia poetry project. The teachers have allowed students to work across the English learning hub in this lesson. It offers flexible options for group work, individual focus, and multimedia creation. Evelyn can choose to work collaboratively with her peers in the learning commons, a teacher in one of the general learning spaces, or find a quieter space in the multipurpose room when she needs more focus.

The core of our design for School Infrastructure is to be high quality, fit for purpose learning environments. This can be seen in the experience of students like Evelyn where features of the learning space itself prompt and support technology enabled, high-quality learning no matter the location in NSW.

Evelyn’s experience shows:

- How different features of a learning environment can support her engaging with various modes of learning, and allows her to either get support from her teacher or learn through independent or collaborative work.
- Her familiarity with adaptable spaces in the standardised learning hub is carried through her schooling experience across different schools.
- The seamless integration of ICT supports her multimedia projects and provides opportunity to learn.

This case study illustrates how our designs promote seamless access to ICT and support a range of teaching strategies, ensuring schools remain relevant and adaptable as students achieve and prepare for a meaningful future, supporting Our Plan for NSW Public Education.



3.3

Mateo’s exploration in vocational education and training

Mateo, a senior student, begins his lesson in the commercial kitchen gathering data on hygiene practices for Hospitality. Once his group completes their data collection, they move into the learning commons, where they gather around a large table to discuss safe food practices. Natural sunlight pours in through the bay windows of the heritage building, creating a seamless blend of functionality and historic preservation. After the discussion, Mateo and his classmates return to their General Learning Space (GLS), using their laptops to take part in a self-marking revision quiz. The spaces allow student transition from one mode of learning to another, enabling students to engage in practical work, collaboration, and independent learning — all within the same lesson.

At the forefront of our school design vision is the integration of sustainable and adaptable infrastructure that meets the needs of students while promoting environmental stewardship. This can be seen in the experiences of students like Mateo, a senior student engaged in hands-on, collaborative learning in a flexible environment that is both adaptable and promotes both academic growth.

Mateo’s experience shows:

- School design supports his use of various learning modes: hands-on, group collaboration in commons, and individual study in GLS.
- Flexible spaces are easily adaptable and durable, grouped to maximise the use of specialist spaces providing resources for students like Mateo to excel.
- Heritage elements connect students with the school’s history, while continued use preserves long-term heritage values.
- Supports vocational education, apprenticeships, and HSC pathways, ensuring students graduate ready for success as informed, responsible citizens.

This case study illustrates how our designs promote equitable access to multi-purpose learning spaces that encourage lifelong learning and work skills development, supporting Our Plan for NSW Public Education.



3.4

Isla’s tour of the school

Isla, a confident Year 4 student, is leading new students and their families on a tour of her school. As she walks them through the school’s entry access from the street front, she points out the school’s mural near the entrance. The mural is vibrant and celebrates the many nationalities of origin across the school community, setting the tone for the inclusive atmosphere that defines her school. As they head to the library, Isla points out the walking track that winds through their sensory garden that students use during break time or when they need an activity to support a return to readiness to learn.

Creating safe, inclusive, and welcoming spaces is at the core of our vision for School Infrastructure. Through thoughtful design, we ensure that every student feels a sense of belonging and that all members of the school community are valued and supported. This is represented by the experience of students like Isla, a Year 4 student, whose school’s design reflects its commitment to inclusion and community identity.

Isla’s experience shows:

- The community-focused design fosters belonging and connection and she can proudly show off her school through features like the welcoming mural.
- The value placed on diverse experiences and needs through physical aspects of the school design.

These features are a symbol of this school’s culture, reducing disparities in student outcomes by addressing diverse community needs and ensuring all students feel safe, allowing them to thrive.

- Isla and her friends enjoy the welcoming school entrance as well as the active outdoor spaces, such as a walking track and sensory garden, supporting their physical and mental health.

This case study illustrates how our designs prioritise safe, inclusive spaces that enhance student wellbeing and provide equitable access to high-quality learning environments, supporting Our Plan for NSW Public Education.



© NSW Department of Education

3.5

Mr Vincent’s preschool playground

Mr Vincent supervises his preschool class of 4 year-olds in the playground. The preschool is co-located in a primary school. The space has been carefully crafted to balance open play areas with structured environments, ensuring safety, teacher line of sight while supporting the children’s need for exploration and play based learning. Some children choose to explore the dry creek bed in the nature play area, a space that was designed in collaboration with the local NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc (AECG) to reflect an important local river. Other children are using a play structure as a shop, role playing selling ‘sand pies’ in a shared imaginative game.

Our vision for School Infrastructure is deeply rooted in the belief that culturally responsive design can promote excellence and foster a positive learning environment. This commitment is demonstrated through real-world applications, such as in the experience of staff like Vincent, a preschool educator, who interacts with students in a carefully designed outdoor space that nurtures imagination, cultural connection, and play-based learning.

Mr Vincent’s experience shows:

- Teaching in visually appealing, well-planned space fosters imaginative play, collaboration, and physical activity, promoting whole-child development.
- Co-locating in primary schools provides young students with safe, welcoming, and responsive learning environment. Familiar settings facilitate a smooth transition from preschool to primary school, supporting comprehensive wellbeing practices across the school community.
- Playground design incorporates cultural references such as a natural creek bed, connecting students to Country and fostering community engagement.

This case study illustrates how our designs enhance learning experiences, build community confidence, and how culturally responsive designs strengthen community ties, supporting Our Plan for NSW Public Education.



4 Appendix

4.1

Transport and Infrastructure SEPP - Design quality principles in schools

		Government Architect NSW's design principles						
		Responsive to context	Sustainable, efficient and resilient	Accessible and inclusive	Healthy and safe	Functional and comfortable	Flexible and adaptable	Visually appealing
EFSG Design vision and objectives topics	2.1 Standardised design and the Pattern Book	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	2.2 Whole of life		x			x	x	
	2.3 Designing with Country	x		x		x		x
	2.4 Heritage	x				x		x
	2.5 Sustainability	x	x		x		x	x
	2.6 Inclusive design		x	x	x	x		
	2.7 Supported learning settings for students with disability		x	x	x	x		
	2.8 Early learning facilities	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	2.9 Site planning and building design	x		x	x	x	x	x
	2.10 Landscape and open space	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	2.11 Transport, circulation and movement	x	x	x	x		x	
	2.12 Sharing school spaces	x		x			x	
	2.13 Technology and communications					x	x	
	2.14 Safety in design				x		x	
	2.15 Safety and Security				x			x

© NSW Department of Education

4.2

References

Dovey, K., & Fisher, K. (2014). Designing for adaptation: the school as socio-spatial assemblage. The Journal of Architecture, 19(1), 43-63.

Prain, Vaughan & Cox, Peter & Deed, Craig & Edwards, Debra & Farrelly, Cathleen & Keeffe, Mary & Lovejoy, Valerie & Mow, Lucy & Sellings, Peter & Waldrip, Bruce. (2015). Personalising learning in open-plan schools.

Young, F., Cleveland, B., & Imms, W. (2019). The affordances of innovative learning environments for deep learning: educators' and architects' perceptions. The Australian Educational Researcher, 47, 693–720.

NSW Department of Education, Our Plan for NSW Public Education, https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/strategies-and-reports/plan-for-nsw-public-education

Government Architect NSW, Design Guide for Schools, https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/government-architect-nsw/design-guidance/design-guide-for-schools

NSW Department of Education

NSW GOVERNMENT