

Design Note 1: Entrance, Reception and Staff Base





Entrance, Reception and Staff Base

If a school physical education facility is to be suitable for community use, it requires signposting, car parking, an entrance, a reception area, social and circulation space, a staff-base and a club room. The layout and design of these is crucial to ensuring an attractive, well-run facility. Drawing 1 shows how the various components of the physical education facility could relate to each other.

Access and Parking

The facility must be well signposted from the main road, be noticeable to passers-by, and the access point easily identifiable for first time users.

The school access point may be shared or a separate access provided, and the decision may be influenced by factors such as the size and layout of the school and whether the entrance doorway to the facility itself is shared by school and community users.

There should be sufficient car parking and covered cycle parking spaces for both staff and the public, and disabled parking spaces of sufficient size and number close to the entrance to the facility. A drop-off point for cars, vans and buses should be provided adjacent to the entrance, preferably under cover. Space is also required for emergency vehicles. All external areas should be well-lit at night, ideally overlooked, and the design of boundary treatments, landscaping and lighting arrangements should encourage natural surveillance and avoid areas of deep shadow. Closed Circuit Television may be installed if considered necessary for security.

Entrance

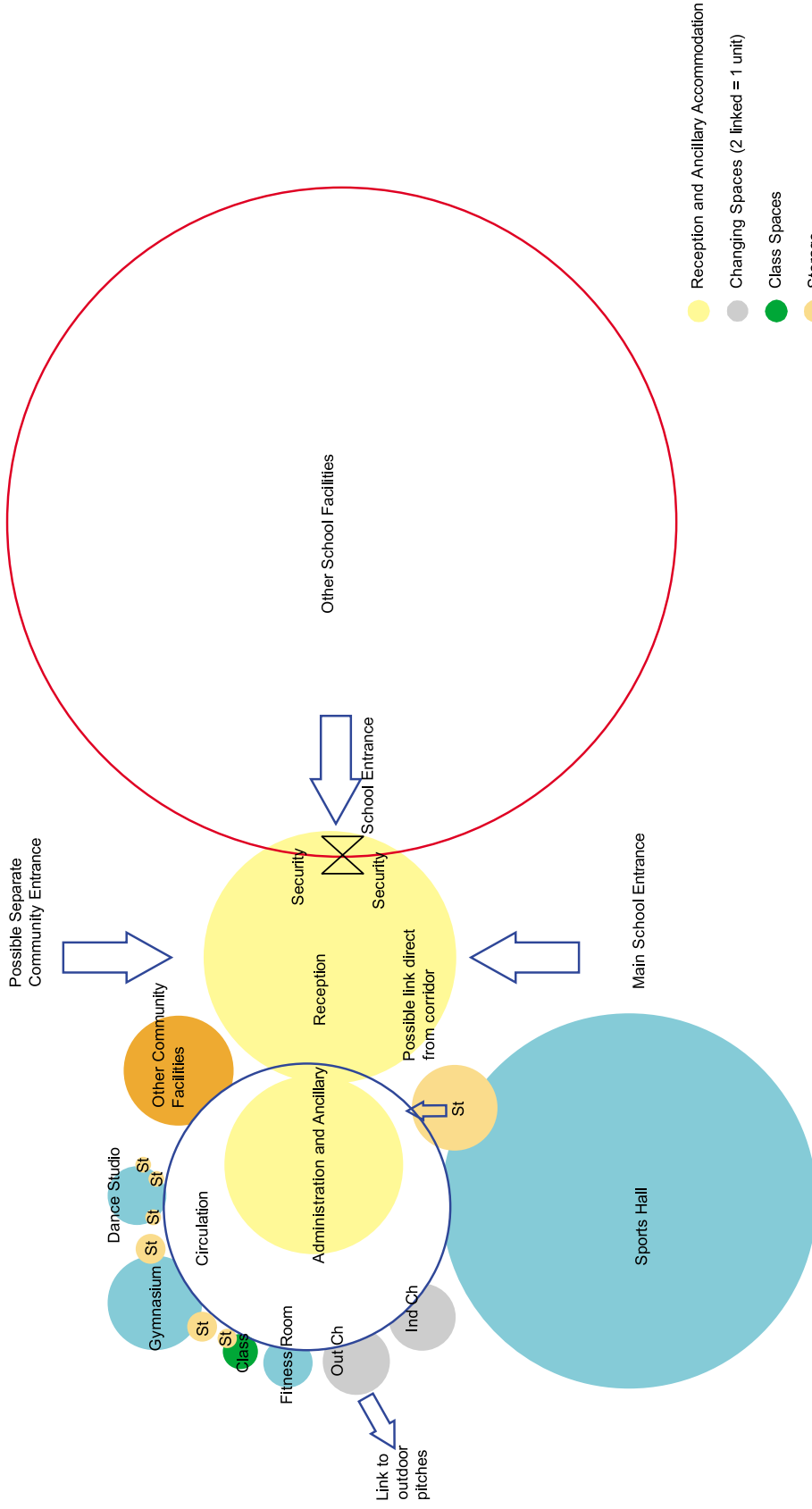
The entrance to the facility should be close to disabled parking, well-defined and well-signposted with large letters, particularly if it is separate from the main school entrance. Thresholds

should be flush and, if possible, absolutely level. Automatic entrance doors, operated by push-button or Passive Infra-Red Detectors are recommended.

A lobby will reduce drafts and heat loss, and can also be lit to an intermediate level for those with visual impairment to adjust from the daylight to a duller interior and vice versa. A suitable mat can also reduce the amount of dirt carried into the building by footwear, but this must be placed in a well to provide a level surface. Space within the entrance or main reception area, overlooked by the reception desk, should be set aside for the parking of baby buggies and the like.



Prominent, well-designed sign-posting is essential.



Drawing 01: P.E. Complex Relationship Diagram



Reception and Ancillary Spaces

The entrance and reception area are the principal means of managing access to the facility and the activities taking place within it. The relationship between this area and the main school entrance (if separate) must be considered, as should the need, for security and child protection reasons, to segregate community users from the rest of the school.



Any other community facilities provided at the school, for example a library, should ideally be accessed via the same entrance and reception area as the sports facilities.

The facilities should ideally be planned to allow both school and community access during the school day but must also allow the rest of the school accommodation to be securely locked and inaccessible during community use in the evenings and the weekend.

The reception area should be brightly lit, open and welcoming, with corridors reduced to a minimum. This makes the building layout easier to understand and navigate for first time and disabled users and aids staff supervision. Plenty of space is required for displaying information on current activities, classes and sporting and social events.

The reception desk should be clearly identifiable from the entrance. In turn, staff sitting behind the desk should be able to see the main entrance doors, the entrance or access to the changing areas (in order to monitor activities and deter vandalism) and the entrances or approaches to the activity areas. If possible, the reception desk should be adjacent to the staff base. The desk itself should be designed and equipped to assist use by people with a range of disabilities and at least have the following features or aids:

- Be well lit but non reflective and located so that it is not silhouetted against a background with excessive contrast in light;
- Have a projecting surface of between 700-750mm above floor level to allow knee space below for wheelchair users;
- Have heights which are suitable for ambulant disabled users;
- Have an induction loop;
- Have good signage which may include Braille; and
- Allow easy retrieval of information, money etc.

Toilets, including a disabled user toilet and baby changing facility, should be provided adjacent to the reception and social areas, as should a public telephone. Drinking water dispensers should also be provided.



A fully equipped first aid room must be provided. It should be located as close as the layout of the facility allows to both the front door and the activity areas. In order to accommodate a stretcher and attendant, door openings should not be less than 1.1m wide – this can be achieved using a ‘penny-farthing’ door and hinged panel arrangement. Space should be provided for a couch, folded stretcher, chair, sink and lockable cupboard and still allow a stretcher to be wheeled in and out.

The control room for services is likely to be located within or adjacent to the reception. The management and funding arrangements of the school and community facilities may require separate metering in order that the costs of school and community use can be calculated separately.

Ideally, community sports facilities should provide views into the activity areas from reception and social areas. This gives a feeling of open-ness, helps staff to monitor activities and allows the facility to exude the buzz associated with sporting activity. However, some school and community activities may require privacy. It is recommended, therefore, that views into activity areas are provided where possible but that these should be double glazed with blinds between the glass panes. When privacy is required, the blinds may be operated from within the activity space using flush-fitting controls.

A cleaners’ room with sink must be provided, ideally close to the changing accommodation.

Social Area

Space within the entrance and reception should be set aside for waiting, meeting and as a social space. Sufficient seating should be provided for these activities and to serve a vending or catering facility if there is likely to be sufficient demand. The social area should be designed with flexibility in mind to accommodate a range of uses and change in management practices over the life of the facility. Fixed furniture may restrict such flexibility. Ideally, a crèche should also be provided.



Staff Base

The sports facilities and equipment will be shared by school and community users, and this principle should where possible extend to teaching and sports centre staff sharing office, changing and storage accommodation. Some dedicated lockable storage and filing will, however, be necessary for cash, valuables and confidential records. The sharing of accommodation will require a positive and flexible attitude from staff and management, but will help reduce the overall amount of space required for the facility and hopefully assist in its integrated management. In some schools, however, there may be factors which make this impractical and the amount of office accommodation must be increased accordingly.

A small private meeting room may also be required for pupil guidance, meeting with parents and the like. Finally, a separate office(s) may be required for the Head of Department and/or Manager of the sports facility.

The size of the staff base should be based on the likely maximum numbers of staff using the facility at any one time. In calculating this, allowance should be made for overlap periods between school and community use and indeed for concurrent use by both. Sufficient space must be provided for staff meetings, training sessions and the like. The design of the staff base should, as far as practicable, minimise noise from the reception and social areas interfering with the working environment.

Club Room/Class Room

A key factor in facilitating community use of the facility may be the provision of a separate room which may be used as a club base or community meeting room. It may be shared by more than one club and ideally would double up as the PE classroom during the school day. The ideal location for this will probably be close to the main reception area.

This room will be constructed and serviced in accordance with the specifications and design principles applied to classrooms throughout the school. Computer study stations will be provided and pupils will need to store and access their own work. A whiteboard and video/DVD facilities are also recommended.

In addition, the classroom may be enhanced by the addition of lockable rooms which can function as club offices/store-rooms. These should be equipped with a computer with internet access and have sufficient storage space.

Designers should take the opportunity to allow use of this space to be as flexible as possible, giving careful consideration to the needs of club users as well as to the needs of the school. The design and fitting out of this room will therefore require careful consideration to ensure it meets the requirements of each user group. For example, children's toilet facilities would also allow this room to be used as a crèche. Sufficient noise reduction measures are required to ensure noise from activity areas does not cause undue distraction to users of the classroom/clubroom.



Suitably designed, this space will prove suitable for community use, for example as a base for local sports clubs.



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