



# The School Places Challenge

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 Scape Group

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## Executive Summary

This report looks at the current school building challenge across England, by analysing primary and secondary pupil projection numbers from the Department of Education and local authorities.

*There will be:*

# 366,000

**extra primary school pupils by 2020  
(an 8.6% increase on 2015)**

# 362,000

**extra secondary school pupils by 2020  
(an 11.7% increase on 2015)**

*Department of Education,  
School Capacity Statistics*

The current system will be overwhelmed in less than 5 years unless drastic action is taken.

**By 2020 local authorities are projecting there will be an extra 366,000 primary school pupils and an extra 362,000 secondary school pupils.** To accommodate them, the country will have to build over 24,000 extra classrooms or over 2,000 extra schools.

In the past year alone, England’s primary school population has jumped by 2.4% or 91,000 extra pupils, which is the equivalent of 434 single entry primary schools or more than 3,000 additional primary classrooms.

As the growth of the primary school population gathers pace, the pressure on school places will soon transfer to the secondary population, requiring a new wave of advanced school-building. The Department for Education is projecting the secondary population will grow by 574,000 by 2025, which presents a huge challenge.

In a post-Brexit economy, with all of the uncertainty this brings, the construction of new schools must sit high on the government’s agenda, and local authorities must be given the necessary tools and funding required to deliver extra places in time.



**“The country will soon start to feel the full weight of the impending boom in pupil numbers, and we’re already seeing unprecedented pressure on school places. A radical new wave of school-building should be a top priority for government.”**

**Mark Robinson**  
Scape Group Chief Executive

# England's School Building Challenge

**England is facing a significant challenge.** The school age population, who rely on state schools, will grow by almost 10% by 2020, increasing by 729,000, and the country's schools will have to accommodate an increase that equates to the entire population of Leeds.

By 2020, the rise in numbers will equate to an extra 2,122 schools, of which 1,744 would need to be 1FE primary schools and 378 would need to be secondary schools, with enough capacity for 1,000 pupils each. The total increase in pupils across England is the equivalent of 24,287 classrooms.



**10%**  
growth of school age population by 2020

**2,122**  
extra schools required by 2020

**729,000**  
extra school pupils by 2020  
(a 10% increase)

**OVER 24,000**  
extra classrooms required by 2020

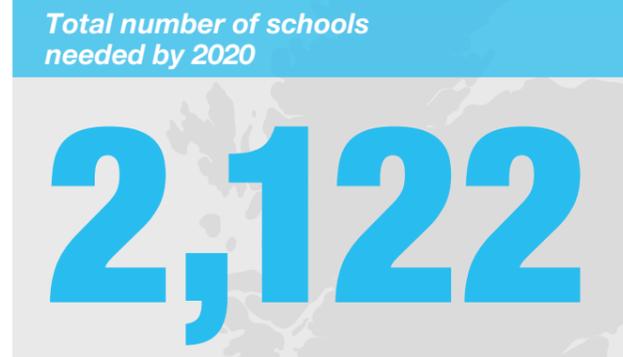
	2015	2020	% increase on 2015	Extra school places required	Extra classrooms	Extra Schools
Primary (age 4-10)	4,269,357	4,635,640	8.6%	366,283	12,209	1,744
Secondary (age 11-15)	3,108,707	3,471,040	11.7%	362,333	12,078	378
All pupils	7,378,064	8,106,680	9.9%	728,616	24,287	2,122

# England's Regions

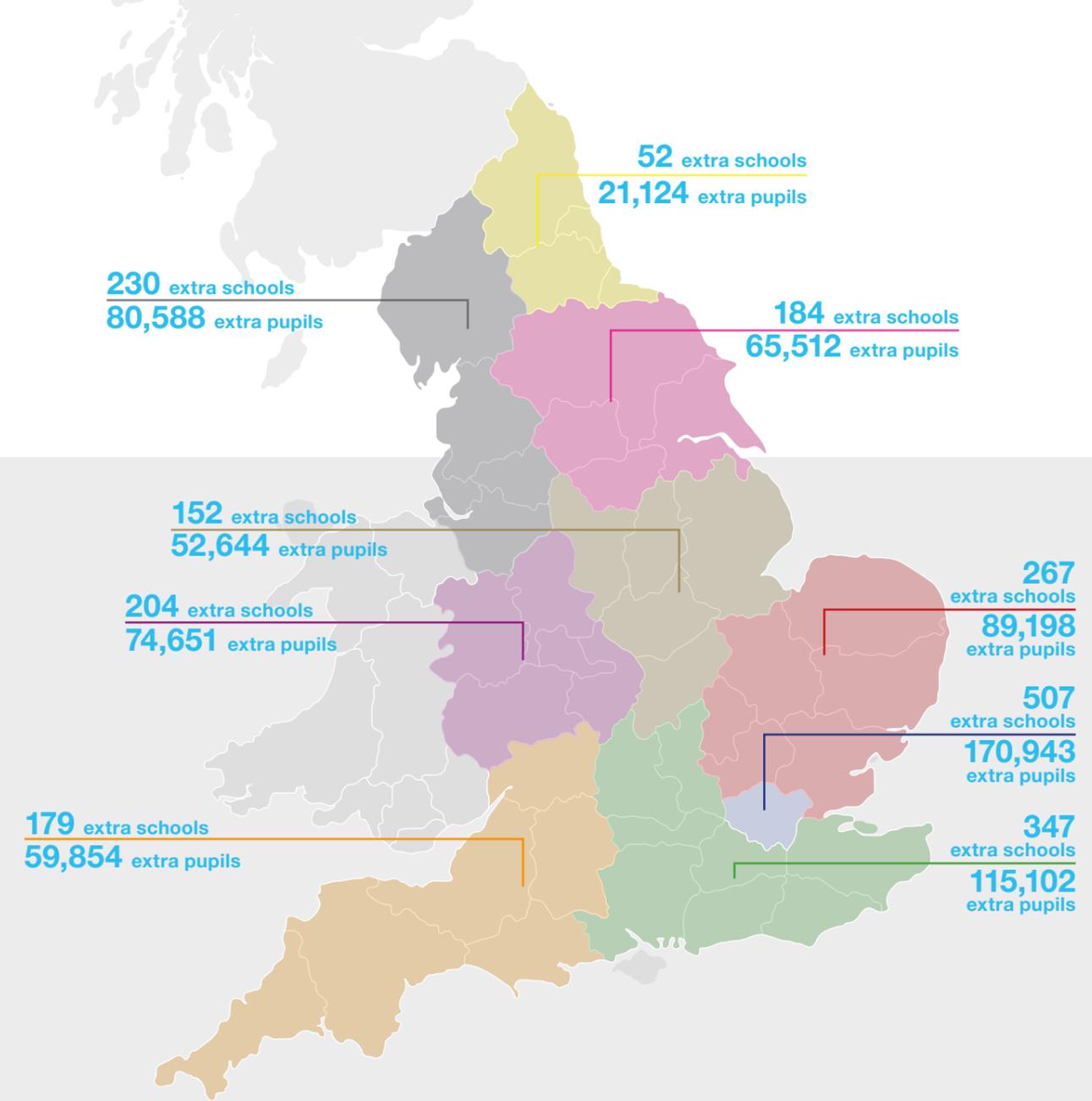
The growth in both primary and secondary pupil numbers across the country is high, but the projected increase will be felt more strongly in some regions and districts than others.

London, the East of England and the South East will see the biggest increases, with the capital set to see a 15% increase in the number of pupils within the next four years. London will see an extra 170,943 pupils by 2020, which is more additional pupils than the North East, East Midlands and South West combined, or eight times as many pupils as the North East alone. London and the South East,

taken as a whole, will see an increase of 260,141 additional pupils, the equivalent of 854 new schools. However, it is clear that every region of England faces a school building challenge. Even the North East, the region set to see the smallest growth (6%), will need to build as many as 52 new schools over the next four years to accommodate the projected increase in pupils.



**London is set to see a 15% increase in the number of pupils within the next four years**



## Projected pupil growth across England

Regions	No of extra primary and secondary pupils by 2020	All Pupils % growth	No of 1FE primary schools needed	No of secondary schools needed	Total number of schools
London	170,943	15	421	86	507
East of England	89,198	11	222	45	267
South East	115,102	10	291	56	347
West Midlands	74,651	9	162	42	204
Yorkshire and the Humber	65,512	9	149	35	184
South West	59,854	9	150	29	179
East Midlands	52,644	8	124	28	152
North West	80,588	8	187	43	230
North East	21,124	6	38	14	52

## Local Authorities

At a local level, there are acute pressures on some local authorities, which will see a significant growth in the number of places needed over the next four years.

Outside of London, the Northern Powerhouse city of **Manchester** will see a **27% increase in the number of primary and secondary pupils**, requiring the equivalent of 48 new primary schools and nine new secondary schools in just four years.

Although Manchester will see the highest rate of growth outside of London, most of the authorities forecasting **the biggest increases in population are located in the South East and East of England.**

Areas in the London commuter belt, such as **Reading, which will see a 25% increase** in the number of pupils, **Slough which will see a 20% increase**, and **Bracknell Forest forecasting an 18% increase**, are seeing their populations grow on the back of London's own surging population.

The other locations in the top 10 are some of England's key growth cities – Peterborough, Milton Keynes, Nottingham and Bristol.

Local authorities	Number of extra primary and secondary pupils by 2020	All Pupils % growth	Number of 1FE primary schools needed	Number of secondary schools needed	Total number of schools
Manchester	18,842	27	48	9	57
Reading	4,717	25	13	2	15
Peterborough	6,944	21	16	4	20
Slough	5,178	20	11	3	14
Milton Keynes	7,903	19	24	3	27
Leicester	8,847	19	19	5	24
Bracknell Forest	3,021	18	6	2	8
Thurrock	4,354	18	11	2	13
Nottingham	6,614	17	17	3	20
Bristol	8,900	17	21	5	26

*In the next four years Manchester will need*

**48 + 9**

*new primary schools*

*new secondary schools*

**25%**

*increase in the number of primary and secondary pupils in Reading within the next four years*

**The biggest increases in population outside of the Capital will be seen in the South East and East of England**



# London

London is set to see the highest growth in both primary and secondary pupils of any city in the UK.

The capital will see a **15% increase in school population by 2020**, which will require 507 new schools to meet the rising numbers. Of these, 356 will be required in Inner London boroughs and 151 in Outer London.

The pressure on school places in the capital has been a long-standing issue for the city's residents, and parents find it increasingly difficult to get their children into their first, second or even third choice school.

The shortage of available land for school-building is leading to the creation of larger schools, particularly primary schools, and one solution in areas that will see the most growth could be more 'super-schools', of ten form entries or more.

**The capital must also find space for as many as 86 secondary schools**, as the growing primary school population moves into secondary school. **Local authorities could also respond to the challenge by creating 'super-secondaries'** with sufficient space and facilities for 4,000 pupils, but London would still need to create 22 such schools by 2020 to accommodate the growing school population.

**507**   
new schools required by 2020



London	Number of extra primary and secondary pupils by 2020	All Pupils % growth	Number of 1FE primary schools needed	Number of secondary schools needed	Total number of schools
London	170,943	15	421	86	507
Inner London	116,588	15	300	56	356
Outer London	54,355	14	121	30	151



# London's boroughs

The rate of growth within London is not evenly spread, and some boroughs are set to see their pupil populations grow five times faster than other boroughs.

The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham will see the highest rate of growth by a significant margin, with a 28% increase in pupil numbers by 2020. This equates to 22 new primary schools and six new secondary schools within four years.

**Newham in east London is facing the biggest school building challenge – the borough will see a 23% increase in pupils by 2020**, which would require 37 new schools to be built, including 31 primary schools and six secondary schools.

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea will see the smallest rate of growth of all of London's boroughs, with an increase of just 5% by 2020.

However, the growth will mainly come from secondary pupils, and the borough will actually see a 2% fall in primary pupil population by 2020.

The London Borough of Camden and the London Borough of Haringey will also see relatively low all-pupil growth rates, of 6.8% and 6.7% respectively. These are much lower than the London average, but also significantly lower than the average rate of growth in the rest of England, which is 9.9% growth by 2020. By way of comparison, the rates of growth in these urban inner-London boroughs is marginally less than that of rural Cornwall in the far South West of the country, which will see a 6.9% increase.

**Some boroughs' pupil populations are set to grow five times faster than others:**

**28%**   
growth for the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

**6.8%**   
growth for the London Borough of Camden

London boroughs	Number of extra primary and secondary pupils by 2020	All Pupils % growth	Number of 1FE primary schools needed	Number of secondary schools needed	Total number of schools needed
Barking and Dagenham	10,276	28	22	6	28
Lambeth	7,677	23	17	4	21
Newham	12,195	23	31	6	37
Greenwich	8,244	23	21	4	25
Richmond upon Thames	4,842	21	11	3	14
Harrow	6,485	20	21	2	23
Hackney	5,743	19	9	4	13
Redbridge	9,363	18	23	5	28
Havering	6,354	17	18	3	21
Hounslow	6,246	17	15	3	18

# Spotlight on Birmingham – Tackling the ‘Capacity Gap’

Birmingham is the second largest city in the country by population, with 1.1 million residents. The city is set to see a **13% increase in its primary and secondary population, with 22,957 extra pupils by 2020**, the largest numerical increase in the country. The number of extra pupils is **higher than the increases for the entire North East of England (21,124 pupils)**.

Birmingham City Council so far only has plans to deliver 878 additional places, which when combined with the current number of spare places, would leave a **capacity shortfall of 4,922 school places by 2020**. The Council must therefore build around 15 new schools by 2020. The shortfall will mean that one in five pupils will not get a place unless more schools are built.



Birmingham City Council							
	Number of extra pupils by 2020	Pupils % growth	Number of new schools needed	Capacity: Places currently available	Pipeline: Places which the authority has firm plans to deliver by 2020	Capacity Gap: Total number of school places which must be provided by 2020	Schools Gap: Equivalent number of schools which must be built by 2020 <sup>1</sup>
Primary	10,324	9.77%	49	7,829	n/a	n/a	12
Secondary	12,633	17.78%	13	9,328	n/a	n/a	3
All Pupils	22,957	12.99%	62	17,157	878	4,922	15

<sup>1</sup> Assumes 50% of places will be required by primary pupils and 50% by secondary pupils. Department of Education School Capacity figures does not provide a breakdown of planned places.



**4,922**  
*school places must be provided in Birmingham by 2020*



Birmingham currently has significant capacity within its existing schools, with enough places for 18,035 primary and secondary pupils. In practice it is not possible for a local authority to fill 100% of its places (there must always be spare capacity) and spare places alone will not be enough to fully deal with the growing numbers.

# Case Study



Project: **Kempston Rural Primary School**  
Client: **Bedford Borough Council**  
Timescale: **39 weeks, and ready for the new school year**  
Value: **£4.3m**

## Challenge:

Kempston Rural Primary School was in need of an expansion to serve both the existing community and also the families that had moved into a new housing development in the local area. The increase in demand for places at the school meant there was an urgent requirement for more capacity and the current school wasn't in a location to be modified successfully.

## Action:

Bedford Borough Council decided to construct a Sunesis Keynes<sup>2</sup> 2FEN school on a site around a mile from the existing Victorian school. This provided a unique solution with a guaranteed timescale and budget that provided peace of mind to the teachers, parents and pupils alike. The new school would be able to accommodate 420 pupils and also had a 30 full-time place nursery facility.

## Outcomes:

- Excellent acoustics, promoting enhanced concentration from children in lessons.
- New learning streets: pupils are encouraged to develop independent learning styles by moving between the classrooms and the learning street, all within a safe and secure environment.

- The space within the learning street has enabled the school to hold events such as the Christmas Fair.
- High ceilings in the learning street, large windows and rooflights, and the bi-folding doors at each end give a feeling of volume and space with terrific light levels.
- Dedicated cooking area has enabled staff to raise the profile of this topic and cookery's emphasis in the curriculum has been vastly improved.
- The school hall is able to accommodate a recent introduction of free school

meals for all Key Stage children. Many schools have struggled to cope with this initiative as they lack the space to sit half of the school down at the same time.

- Parental involvement and participation has increased, and this is a significant development as evidence shows parental and family involvement in a child's education brings many positive benefits to the child. A recent session whereby parents came in to school to support the children in a maths lesson then developed into a session for parents where they were shown how modern maths is now taught.



**“The acoustics are excellent and the children have responded to this by showing increased levels of concentration.”**

**Angela Stanbridge,**  
Headteacher, Kempston Rural School



# Case Study



Project: **Cotton End Lower School, Bedford**  
Client: **Bedford Borough Council**  
Timescale: **16 Weeks**  
Value: **£679,000**

## Challenge:

A popular and rapidly expanding primary school relying on 20-year old mobile Portakabin-style units needed new modern classroom space urgently.

Due to accelerated local housing developments and the school's popularity, Cotton End's intake had increased from around 40 to over 100 pupils and, being well past their expected lifespan, the existing mobile classrooms were not fit to accommodate such rapid growth.

## Action:

As a result, Bedford Borough Council decided that three new classrooms and one new nursery unit needed to be built and chose the Connect by Lungfish method, procured through the Scape National Minor Works framework, delivered by Kier.

The dilapidated mobile units, which displayed all the associated problems commonly seen in such temporary structures, were replaced with light and airy classrooms. Floor to ceiling windows bring the outdoors in – a principal feature in Lungfish's designs. Where the old classrooms were cold and damp in winter, the underfloor heating in the new buildings means that carpet time for reading stories is a favourite part of the school day

now – the children can wear slippers or even walk around in their socks.

## Outcomes:

- There is plenty of storage and display space and ICT provision is greatly improved. The new walls are strong enough to support touch screen displays, which had not been the case in the mobile classrooms, benefiting the children with the latest technology and teaching methods. The teachers themselves also greatly value the ability to utilise current teaching practices by being able to keep on top of technological advances in a live teaching environment.
- The foyer for each classroom is spacious, providing plenty of room to hang coats and PE bags and allowing room for break-out teaching where one-to-one support is required. Previously such support was very obvious and took place in

inappropriate locations such as the headteacher's office or staffroom.

- With easy access to outdoors and level access from each classroom, there is no need for ramps, and people with disabilities or mobility difficulties are able to move around with as much ease as possible.
- Above all, the children take real pride in their new classrooms which is evident in their positive approaches to lessons. As one parent commented, "She's loving the new classroom and learning environment."
- The final phase of the project was handed over in October 2014 with all three classrooms and the nursery setting having been in full use ever since. In fact, the pre-school facility is heavily over-subscribed with more than double the number of applicants for the 15 places available in 2015/16.



**"They provide a wonderful, airy and spacious learning environment for the children. They are ideal - the perfect learning environment."**

**Karen Headland,**  
Headteacher



# A word from the industry



**Mark Robinson, Scape Group Chief Executive, comments:**

“Our school age population is projected to grow significantly over the next ten years – a 12% increase on today’s numbers. However, the challenge is already upon us, as the biggest increases will happen in the next four years. As our rising birth rate and migration cause our primary population to surge, we must also prepare for the growing numbers of secondary school pupils which will inevitably follow.

It is more important than ever that school-building is prioritised, and local authorities must be given the freedom and resources to get on with the task at hand.

The government’s preference for free schools has created uncertainty for local authorities, who are tasked with planning and building new schools, but will not be responsible for running them.

The ‘Brexit bombshell’ has also injected an extra dose of uncertainty at a critical moment. The fallout from the EU referendum result has led to questions surrounding the government’s finances and the underlying health of the UK economy, which could have consequences for the country’s school-building programme. Furthermore, the EU exit could also have a significant impact on migration levels – we could see a large jump in the number of EU migrants moving here before Brexit proceedings begin, followed by a levelling out or a significant fall in EU migration once the UK’s exit is complete. It is very difficult to predict what impact these changes will ultimately have, and this puts even more pressure on local authorities who are planning how and where to prioritise school-building.

It is vital that we continue to deliver high quality school places quickly, and that we consider creative solutions to get the job done. Super-schools, standardised design, classroom extensions and more effective use of land to deliver mixed-use developments are all options we need to look at to deliver more school places in time.”

**“It is more important than ever that school-building is prioritised, and local authorities must be given the freedom and resources to get on with the task at hand.”**



**Duncan Green, Perfect Circle Chairman comments:**

“The changing face of education in the UK poses a significant challenge for our clients, our teams and our construction partners.

The influence of the free schools programme, ongoing academisation and constrained education budgets means Local Authorities, Academy Trusts and other education providers are, in some places, struggling to adapt and keep pace with the changing market.

However, the positive trend we have seen in the past year is one of collaboration. Local Authorities

have begun to embrace the free school programme, working in partnership with small and large free school trusts to ensure a joined-up approach is taken to new school provision.

Recognising they now hold a significant mandate to manage and improve their estates, Academy Trusts are beginning to look to organisations like Pick Everard, Gleeds and AECOM (the Perfect Circle partners) to form more strategic, long-term partnerships to deliver transformational change within their estates, and deliver great value projects time and time again.

Ultimately this approach is good news for pupils and teachers. By leveraging the buying power of organisations like Scape, gaining access to best in class consultants and contractors, clients can focus on delivering education whilst trusting their delivery partners are protecting their liability and making best use of budgets.”

**“The influence of the free schools programme, ongoing academisation and constrained education budgets means Local Authorities, Academy Trusts and other education providers are, in some places, struggling to adapt and keep pace with the changing market.”**

# A word from the industry



**Andrew Alsbury, Willmott Dixon Education Director, comments:**

“The continued and urgent need for a well-planned long-term solution to meet rising school place demand in the face of increasing pressure on capital budgets is one of our biggest challenges over the next decade.

It needs a joined-up approach between public and private sectors, local and central government, to bridge the gap. That includes a pragmatic approach to new ideas like component-led designs, off-site construction and strategic procurement arrangements, which

can quickly and affordably create new places at scale while avoiding duplicated costs. The availability of land is also a growing challenge. To meet this we will also need flexibility in how local authorities leverage their land assets and local developments to create new places; the recent example of Berkeley Homes directly procuring a Sunesis primary school under its s106 agreement for a development in Bracknell being an example.

This close cooperation should also tackle assumptions on what constitutes ‘good’ school design, without sacrificing quality. A key example is outside space and how best to provide new places in a world of shrinking school footprints and challenging budgets.

There is much intellectual capital across the industry currently focused on meeting this challenge and this diversity of stakeholders is a key strength. Through even

better cohesion and strong political leadership, we will ensure that, as an industry, we can provide the quality school environments needed to meet the predicted rise in demand.”

**“This close cooperation should also tackle assumptions on what constitutes ‘good’ school design, without sacrificing quality.”**



**Neil Pates, Kier Managing Director Strategic Framework Alliances, comments:**

“The statistics summarised in this latest Scape report highlight the scale of the demand for school places that the UK faces. With over 700,000 extra school pupils predicted by 2020 the construction of new schools and education facilities is an increasing priority for government and many local authorities.

As a market leader in the education sector, Kier is expert in delivering successful primary, secondary, further and higher education buildings. Since 2007, we’ve built or improved facilities for over 120,000 pupils, and together with Scape and architect Lungfish, have developed innovative solutions to sector-specific challenges, like an off-site modular system for quick delivery of permanent school buildings.

This collective expertise and ability to quickly respond to the needs of the education sector, offered through the Scape frameworks, should give clients an excellent solution to the challenge of providing high quality, bespoke and timely learning environments as pupil numbers grow.”

**“This collective expertise and ability to quickly respond to the needs of the education sector, offered through the Scape frameworks, should give clients an excellent solution to the challenge.”**

## About Scape Group

Scape Group is a public sector-owned built environment specialist offering a full suite of national frameworks and innovative design solutions. Scape frameworks are available to any public sector body. Currently over 500 organisations have access to these solutions.

Bringing together the strongest teams from the public and private sector, Scape's rapidly deployed, highly measurable and collaborative approach delivers value for money and quality buildings whilst stimulating local growth and community benefits.



**For press enquiries contact**

**Instinctif Partners: 0207 427 1408**

anna.geffert@instinctif.com

james.mcewan@instinctif.com



Scape, 7th Floor,  
City Gate East, Tollhouse Hill,  
Nottingham NG1 5FS

**T: +44 (0)115 958 3200**

**E: [general@scapegroup.co.uk](mailto:general@scapegroup.co.uk)**

**[scapegroup.co.uk](http://scapegroup.co.uk)**

 **[@Scape\\_Group](https://twitter.com/Scape_Group)**  **[/scape\\_group](https://www.linkedin.com/company/scape_group)**