

# The long-awaited replacement of BB93

Report by Andrew Parkin

Starting in late 2008, many people have given up a lot of their time and resources with the noble aim of revising and refreshing BB93. Since its release in 2003 and adoption as a means of compliance with Part E4 of Building Regulations, BB93 has had a positive impact on the way we have designed schools, giving a sensible and practical framework for school buildings. Although only applicable to infant, primary and secondary education, BB93 has been adopted by many Further and Higher education providers also, in addition to forming the basis of BREEAM credits.

However, the way schools are designed now is not the same as in the early 2000s. The strain started to show during BSF when it was found that BB93 could not give adequate tools to design open plan teaching (remember *transformational learning*, anyone?). Recently during the second Academies Framework, where many schools have been refurbished, further problems occurred as the scope of BB93 does not adequately cater for refurbishment and change of use.

In essence, there was nothing really wrong with BB93 – it just became outdated. After many frustrating false starts and draft revisions, the Department for Education has now published “Acoustic performance standards for the Priority Schools Building Programme”. This document is freely available on the DfE website and forms the acoustic section of the Output Specification, replacing the performance criteria of BB93 for the purposes of this building programme. Although published by EFA, this document is authored by IOA and Association of Noise Consultants members.

In order to be formally adopted as a means of compliance with Part E4, the document will need to go through a statutory three-month consultation period. This period is likely to start in late 2012.

The basic framework of the new document is not significantly different to BB93. However, content has been updated and revised as considered necessary by the contributors, based on experience of using BB93. Key features include:

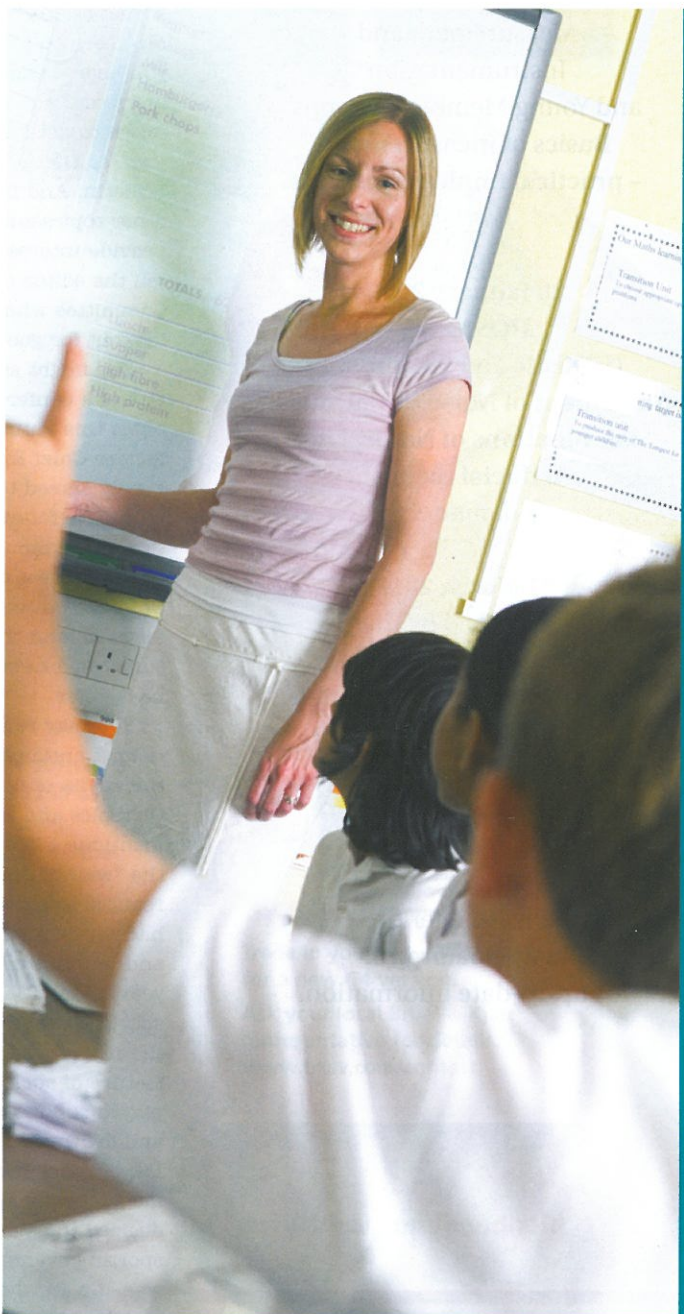
- Clear scope of where, when and how the document applies
- Specific criteria for refurbishments
- Limits on the extent of Alternative Performance Standards, whereby they can be no more extensive than conditions for refurbishments
- Comprehensive description of what constitutes Special Educational Needs
- Minor revisions to target indoor ambient noise levels, sound insulation (airborne and impact) and reverberation times
- More extensive lists of area use types
- Deemed to satisfy ventilation types based on external noise levels, all based on achieving target values for concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in teaching areas
- Replacement of  $D_{nT(T_{mf,max}),w}$  with  $D_{nT,w}$  (where  $T_0 = 0.5$  seconds)
- Composite  $R_w$  value option for elements dividing teaching areas and corridors
- Replacement of  $L'_{nT(T_{mf,max}),w}$  with  $L'_{nT,w}$  (where  $T_0 = 0.5$  seconds)
- Wider frequency range than standard  $T_{mf}$  for SEN
- Relaxation of  $T_{mf}$  in sports halls from 1.5 to 2.0 seconds, together with comprehensive guidance for compliance
- Extended criteria for open plan, together with comprehensive guidance for compliance
- Strong recommendations for pre completion testing, using the ANC Good Practice Guide for Testing as a reference.

This published document only gives performance criteria, with minimal explanation of how to meet the performance targets and no worked examples. DfE was keen for this element of the guidance to be written by Industry and therefore proposals are for

a working party to be formed jointly by the IOA and ANC to make this happen. The ambitious plans are for this second document to be ready for publication in early 2013 that will then be of use to designers of the second wave of PSBP schools.

The IOA Building Acoustics Group conference on 6 November will contain a session on the published document, reflecting on whether it has given acousticians the extent of changes we have been asking for. The ANC conference on the following day will then have a session on practical aspects of the document, the proposals for Section 2 and a panel discussion.

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Classroom acoustics standards are under the microscope