

## Extended Schools Core Offer

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### Childcare

**High-quality childcare benefits children, parents and carers and communities. It enriches children's life experience, it helps parents balance their work and family lives, and it can help raise standards in schools.**

The government's 10-year strategy for childcare, *Choice for parents, the best start for children*, sets out a key role for schools in ensuring children experience high-quality childcare. By giving parents more flexibility in their working hours and choice of work, wraparound childcare also has the potential to lift families out of poverty.

The provision of childcare complements family life by offering parents and children a service that they can trust. However it will be for parents to decide whether they take up the provision, based on the particular circumstances of their family. Both the childcare and parenting support elements of the core extended services have the potential to significantly enhance family life by offering support in areas that often cause anxiety.

The extended school core offer ensures that:

- three- and four-year-old children will receive 15 hours (increased from the current 12.5 hours) of free integrated early learning and care for 38 weeks of the year
- by 2010, parents of primary-age children will have access to affordable childcare from 8am to 6pm all year round. This will be available in at least half of all primary schools by 2008, and
- by 2010, secondary schools will be open from 8am to 6pm all year round, providing access to a range of activities for young people such as music, sport and holiday activities. At least one third of secondary schools should be making this offer available by 2008.

Many schools are well placed to provide high-quality childcare as they offer expertise and a safe environment for children. They also have the confidence of parents.

In some schools limited space may be an issue. Often, the best solution will be for these schools to make the best use of their existing facilities outside of school hours.

Not all activities need to take place on the school site. It will often make sense to find additional capacity through working collaboratively with neighbouring schools and/or other local providers. Local authorities, for example, should seek to maintain and/or increase the supply of childminders in their areas. This may include incentives for prospective childminders as well as additional support for existing childminders. Schools will need to work with their local authority business support officer on the planning of such provision.

The design and content of childcare will vary in detail from school to school. It may be organised and delivered directly by school staff, or through school clusters and/or via third parties.

There are several models of delivery schools and providers can adopt:

- direct delivery – schools as direct deliverers of childcare, making all arrangements themselves, employing staff and charging for the provision or co-locating with children's centres to ensure high-quality provision for early children and/or wraparound care for primary children
- delivering with third parties – schools working with third-party provider/s from the private or voluntary sectors, including childminder networks, and
- working in clusters with other schools – schools sharing resources, such as a childcare manager, to develop the service and/or to rotate responsibility for childcare over holiday periods.

The *Children's workforce strategy* will support the provision of childcare in schools. Its strategic aims include: recruiting, developing and retaining more skilled people, strengthening inter- and multi-agency working and workforce remodelling, and promoting stronger leadership, management and supervision.

In providing extended days it is important to ensure that children have time to rest, play and have healthy snacks. It is also essential to realise young people will only attend activities they find attractive. Schools will need to involve young people in developing their offer. Local authorities have an important role linking strategic planning for services to asset management on buildings and premises.

## Programme of activities

**By 2010, in addition to the childcare offer, all children will be able to access a varied programme of activities beyond the school day.**

**These activities will either be delivered directly by individual schools and/or through schools working collaboratively with neighbour schools and other relevant agencies and organisations. Schools should tailor their menu of activities to meet the needs and demands of their pupils and local communities.**

While the precise menu of activities offered will vary from school to school, it may include activities such as:

- homework clubs and study support
- music tuition
- dance and drama, arts and crafts
- special interest clubs such as chess and first aid courses
- visits to museums and galleries
- learning a foreign language
- catch-up and booster opportunities
- volunteering and business and enterprise activities, and
- sport – at least two hours a week beyond the school day for those who want it

Young people (and this may apply to parents too) will only attend activities they value and want, so this is an excellent opportunity to provide activities relevant to pupils' interests, in ways that engage them. This will also have a positive impact on the mainstream curriculum and help improve motivation, behaviour and levels of achievement.

Many primary, secondary and special schools already provide a varied programme of activities for pupils to develop their skills and explore wider interests beyond their school day. The activities provided by schools as part of their extended offer to pupils will be an important part of the local offer to young people.

Some activities will be delivered solely by schools, others by schools in partnership with the community, the youth service and other children's services. Some activities may be delivered solely by voluntary or private organisations.

However they are delivered, the range of activities on offer should be developed in consultation with young people and parents and should be accessible and inclusive.

Young people and parents will be expected to pay for some activities. Not all young people will wish to attend activities delivered in school but, by working in partnership, schools can signpost them to other providers in the community.

Among many benefits, these activities will enable children to have fun and develop wider interests and new skills, socialise in a safe environment and, in many cases, develop a more positive attitude towards their school and learning. They can also play an important part in helping children live healthier lives and in reducing obesity through providing cookery classes or sports.

## Parenting support

**Parents are the major influence on their children's lives and their prime educators. Good parenting in the home makes an enormous difference to the outcomes of children's learning.**

Research carried out by Professor Charles Desforges confirms that parents are the biggest single influence on their children's lives and the vital importance of good parenting.

Other research studies have found schools that work well with parents have improved levels of achievement, more positive pupil attitudes, improved behaviour and increased parental participation.

Many parents report there are times in their lives when they would benefit from more information, advice and support. The extended schools agenda builds on existing provision to ensure that all schools deliver parenting support. This may include:

- information sessions for all parents at key transition points in their children's lives, particularly starting school, and moving from primary to secondary school
- parenting groups and programmes

- family learning sessions to allow children to learn with their parents
- specialised support for parents who might need it, for example, parents whose children have problems with attendance or behaviour at school, and
- information on the advice and support available to parents – through national helplines and websites, and the local family support service

Schools will want to develop links with local children's services, particularly social services, health and voluntary and community sector providers, securing input from specialist staff who are skilled in facilitating parenting groups and supporting individual parents. It will be crucial to ensure that services are attractive and useful to all parents, including parents from minority ethnic groups and single parents.

Extended schools serve as a hub of services for parents. Over time they are expected to broaden the range of services they make available to parents through, for example, offering services to provide respite care for parents of children with special needs and/or counselling services for parents having relationship difficulties.

Setting up an effective range of extended services that make a difference to parental participation and raise children and young people's achievement and wellbeing, requires in-depth consultation with parents and carers, pupils and the wider community on the services they need and want.

Schools will want to adopt a whole-school approach to improving their links with parents. Trained and skilled support staff or teaching assistants can often be the most appropriate and prime link to families.

Schools that work well with parents can expect significant, lasting benefits, including:

- greater parental involvement in children's learning
- providing better help to staff and parents to address children's wider needs
- reduced health inequality through greater take-up of school-based health and social care services such as smoking cessation club and midwifery services
- improved levels of achievement
- more positive pupil attitudes and behaviour
- increased parental participation in, and support for, the life and work of the school
- greater willingness for parents and school to share information and tackle misunderstandings and problems at an early stage

Where children's centres are co-located alongside schools, there are even greater opportunities to expand the range of services on offer through healthcare and social services.

## Swift and easy referral

**There is a range of specialist health and social care support services that children and young people (and adults) need to access at different times in their lives to support both their general wellbeing and their ability to learn.**

Children's centres and many schools, particularly special schools, have long experience of working closely in partnership with these organisations and have great expertise in swift and easy referral of pupils in need.

The next few years will see an extensive reconfiguration of support services, to offer earlier, more coherent support which meets the needs of children and families in convenient locations and in a more streamlined way. It is an effective way of addressing the wide range of interrelating factors that contribute to poor outcomes for children and young people.

All schools, with the support of local authorities, will facilitate the swift and easy referral of relevant pupils to a wide range of specialist support services such as speech therapy, child and adolescent mental health services, family support services, intensive behaviour support, and (for young people) sexual health services.

Schools, support services and agencies will work together to ensure the needs of all children, young people and their parents or carers, are fully met. Staff in different agencies will work together and share information to promote child safety and well-being. Sharing information with children, young people and their families, so that processes and issues are understood and clear, is important, as is understanding issues and legislation relating to confidentiality of information. Some support services will be situated and delivered on school sites. Offering provision on site or through local partnerships, children's centres and local authority or community sites, improves access to services and creates a more streamlined and supportive referral system for those who need it.

This is vital in working towards the holistic support of the child. The school site is often the key point for services to intervene to support children and young people. School is the one continuous and secure element in many children's lives.

Among its many benefits, swift and easy referral to support services:

- enhances support for vulnerable children and those most at risk
- provides better help to staff and parents to address children's wider needs
- eradicates the possibility of problems getting worse due to delay
- encourages and enables improved communication between agencies, and
- provides additional opportunities for staff in schools. For example, childcare and support staff may be interested in additional work in some of the services.

Presently in its consultation stage, the children's workforce strategy plans to rework and develop a world-class workforce that is competent and confident to make a difference to the lives of those they support.

This workforce will operate across agencies and strengthen inter-agency and multi-disciplinary working and workforce remodelling, and promote stronger leadership, management and supervision.

The common assessment framework will support the drive towards multi-agency working by embedding a shared process of assessing children when they are not progressing as they should and acting on the result. Ofsted will inspect the impact of this on pupils' well-being and learning. Along with the lead professional role, common assessment supports the duty of relevant partners and agencies to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The detail of how it is operated locally is something that will need to be agreed between the local agencies concerned.

## Community access

**All schools have many facilities that could, and often already do, benefit their local communities.**

**These facilities include sport halls and fields, ICT, playgrounds, classrooms, libraries, assembly and dining halls and numerous other physical facilities and educational resources.**

The extended schools agenda builds on the existing provision to ensure that schools open their facilities to their local communities. This can be during school hours and/or before and after the school day and at weekends and holidays.

Not only does greater access to school facilities benefit local communities, it also benefits schools themselves, not least by helping make them even more the 'hub' of community life.

The benefits of greater community access to school facilities include:

- maximising the use of facilities
- improved income from facilities
- improved parent and community familiarity with, and involvement in, schools
- improved sense of community
- improved adult learning opportunities
- greater involvement of community/groups on the school site, and
- dual use of facilities, pupils working with their parents/families

Schools can extend adult learning opportunities by providing, for example, literacy and numeracy support as well as other activities to engage adults in learning such as languages, arts and crafts and other activities or qualifications.

Schools can also help adults, as well as children, develop skills that match the local skills gap and industrial and/or business changes in the area.

A number of schools are already a base for social care and/or health services in their communities. It is anticipated that many more schools will develop this role.