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Transport

Limited local transport or safety concerns can prevent some families from using a school's childcare service (eg no buses out of school hours, children having to walk to school on their own early in the morning).

Schools working with children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have their own transport challenges (eg their catchment areas may be large and children have to travel long distances, transport may be specialised, local authorities may not provide transport outside school hours).

This section shows how different schools across England are overcoming transport difficulties and opening up their childcare provision to more families.



Use a mini-bus

Some schools have their own mini-bus(es), which may rarely be used out of school hours. A special school in the Midlands used its mini-bus to transport children home during the holiday programme. This ensures that all families can access the provision if they want to.

Schools can also raise money by renting out their mini-bus(es) to a private school-based childcare provider when they are not in use.

As well as helping a provider to overcome transport difficulties, mini-buses can also be a useful marketing tool. A club in the North West has put its name, location and contact details on the sides of its mini-buses, so that people in the area can see what the company offers.

Using a mini bus means that families don't have to ferry children to and from the childcare provision – and they know the children will be transported quickly and safely between venues.

Use a walking bus

A club in the North West operates a 'walking bus' to collect children from two local schools that wish to access its after-school care.

Use a mix of methods

Some providers use a range of transport methods (eg walking bus and mini-bus).

Find local support

Liaise with local bus services and taxi companies (eg to run at different times to suit the childcare provision or to offer discounted travel for families using your provision).

Work in partnership

Schools that have handed over the running of their childcare provision to a third-party organisation can overcome transport barriers by working in partnership with the provider.

Setting up wraparound childcare in partnership with other schools can make the sharing of vehicles (eg mini-buses) or vehicle hire easier.

Schools can also work in partnership with each other to achieve economies of scale. Costs can be shared in clusters, federations, and children's centres. Each can contribute an amount per year to ensure part-use of the vehicle, as agreed by all.

Unique Kidz and Co runs an after-school and holiday club in Lancashire for disabled children aged 3–19 and their siblings.

The charity has used a variety of sites since its inception (The Loyne Specialist School etc). Depending on the site being used, and where the children are coming from, they may be brought straight to the provision by staff after their lessons.

Unique Kidz has fully-accessible mini-buses, so they can collect children from around the town and from other special schools, who would otherwise have no means of getting to the after-school club.

The mini-buses are also used when the children/young people go out on trips. Some parents choose to drop their children at the provision, especially during the holidays.

Without this transport, there would be a significant number of children and families who would be unable to benefit from the service.

Apply for funding

Approach grant-giving bodies and ask them to help fund your transport needs. Unique Kidz and Co were successful in gaining the use of vehicles from a local company, which let the charity use the mini buses in return for having their branding on the vehicles.

Ask for advice

Family Action planned a meeting with the transport co-ordinator at Oakfield High School and College, to gain information and advice on how best to support pupils to:

- access childcare provision in the holidays
- get to school earlier for a breakfast club
- leave later after the after-school club.

The transport co-ordinator applied for bus passes for all pupils to enable them to experience public transport, in both their school and social life to encourage independence.

The school also looked into the possibility of using the council's 'ring-and-ride' service, which supports vulnerable people to access community clubs and facilities.



Pupils from Oakfield High School and College

Help to co-ordinate lifts

Encourage parents to organise a transport rota or a car-sharing scheme to take children home from after-school and holiday care.

At a special school in the Midlands, parents are supporting each other to arrange transport for their children to and from activities.

Check guidelines

If you are hiring an external company to transport children, ensure they are following appropriate guidelines, for instance:

- What vehicle will be used?
- What car seats will be used and who supplies them? What are the rules about seatbelts, etc?
- Do you require the parent to sign a permission form?
- What licence and insurance do they have?

If school staff will be transporting children, ensure that all staff have up-to-date driving licences to drive the right type of vehicles.

Also include the driving licence requirement in job descriptions.

Whatever approach is taken to transport, make it clear to families whether or not transport will be included in the costs of school-based childcare provision.

Further information

- Family Action was funded 2013-15 by the Department for Education (DfE) to support schools to develop wraparound and childcare provision. Find out more about the project, and download a wide range of free resources from: www.learning-exchange.org.uk
- Our Learning Exchange Facebook page gives links to events, suppliers, equipment, training and venues that might be of interest to school-based childcare providers: www.facebook.com/pages/Learning-Exchange/904749822892733?sk=timeline

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