

# 5

## Marketing

**Whether they run childcare provision themselves, or commission a third party to offer childcare on the school site, schools are using a wide range of methods to market their childcare service – school newsletters, posters in local venues, websites/social media and taster sessions, to name but a few.**

**This section outlines some tried and tested ways of marketing school-based childcare provision for older children.**



### Develop a strategy

After conducting market research and deciding on your target audience and the service you wish to offer, you will need to think carefully about developing a marketing strategy:

- What is your marketing budget?
- What marketing methods will you use?
- What are your key messages (eg in terms of quality, affordability, flexibility)?
- Who will be responsible for marketing your childcare provision (eg if a third party will run the provision, are they responsible for marketing the service)?

Having an effective marketing strategy will:

- enable you to publicise details of your provision (eg venue, time, cost)
- help you fill your places, thereby helping the provision to become sustainable
- ensure you meet parents' childcare needs.

It could also help you raise the profile of your school, and even improve the school roll.

## Choose your method(s)

It's vital that all your marketing literature is in a format(s) suitable for your target audience. Different people like to receive information in different ways (eg printed flyer, website, email), so be prepared to use a variety of marketing methods to attract different families.

And if you don't know which format(s) to use, find out from families themselves how they like to receive marketing information – online, via email, by post?

Here are some common ways in which school-based childcare providers have successfully publicised their service. There isn't just one way to market childcare provision.

The method(s) you choose will depend on factors such as your location, budget and families.

### Printed publications

Consider designing and printing flyers, banners or posters to market your service. This doesn't have to cost a fortune.

You could run a competition, asking pupils to design a poster or a newsletter for you. Or you could ask a local printer to sponsor your print run in return for including their advert.

Ensure that your marketing literature is suitable for your audience (eg engaging for a certain age range).

Consider where and how to distribute your flyers, leaflets or posters. You could:

- ask the school to include a flyer or letter in each child's school bag
- put posters in popular locations (eg school notice board, newsagent's, community centre, other schools, library, youth club, children's centre, doctor's, clinic, back of a bus, supermarket).



Why not hang a banner prominently on the school fence, enabling all local parents to see what you are offering? This is an approach taken by a provider in Coventry.

### Information pack

An information pack, distributed either online as a pdf or handed out as a printed publication, can be a useful marketing tool. This will need to be clear and professional looking, and contain information on all aspects of your service, such as:

- contact details
- history of your provision
- an outline of your childcare offer
- prices and terms and conditions
- qualifications and experience of staff
- testimonials from parents.



## Local media

Consider asking the local paper or radio station if you can be interviewed about your new/enhanced provision.

Depending on your finances, you could also place an advert in the local paper (keep it short and highlight your uniqueness).

## Face-to-face events

Consider holding or taking part in different social events to publicise your childcare provision, for instance:

- take part in parent/carer events and tell them about your service (eg parent evenings, PTA meetings)
- hold open days/information sessions, where interested families can visit your provision, ask questions and see what your childcare offers
- run taster sessions, where pupils can take part in activities that you run in your provision (eg 'breakfast with dad' event)
- attend school events to tell pupils about activities you will run (eg assemblies)
- hold a party or a fun launch event in your childcare setting (eg inviting parents, staff).



*Focus group at Crawford Primary School, London*

Fit For Sport used a variety of face-to-face marketing methods to promote the new school-based childcare provision at the Gypsy Hill Federation in London, such as speaking at parents' groups and taking part in assemblies.

The photo (below, left) shows Pascal Duntah, business development manager, speaking to parents at Crawford Primary School in London about the new childcare provision.

The company also markets its services through letters to parents, a lively website and regular e-newsletters.

## Keep information up to date

Parents take into account factors such as location, price, facilities, staffing, and reputation when choosing a childcare provider.

Just because they are currently using your service doesn't mean they won't change to another provider that they feel is offering a more affordable or flexible service.

It's therefore vital that you keep parents informed about developments at your childcare provision and the high-quality service you are offering, for example, through regular e-newsletters.

Publicise your latest special offers and recent improvements to your service, for instance:

- increased flexibility (eg later pick-up times)
- improved quality (eg a new kitemark)
- greater affordability (eg new discounts for siblings).

As well as marketing your service, keeping families up to date with developments will help to foster better understanding of the benefits of the provision, for them and their children.

## Partners

Schools can market their childcare provision through numerous local partners (eg children's centres).

If you are opening up your childcare provision to other schools, ask them if you can include an advert or article in their school newsletter, include your flyer in a mail-out to parents, contribute to an e-newsletter etc.

## Word of mouth

Word of mouth can be a powerful marketing tool. If you have available places, ask existing parents to tell their friends (eg via Facebook).

Encourage focus group or steering group members to 'spread the word'. Acting fast to fill your spaces will help you to keep and maintain your income.

## Websites and online tools

A simple page on your school website might be all you need to inform parents about your provision.

There are also numerous free tools and templates online to help you market your service:

- design newsletters and marketing flyers (eg [www.poweredtemplate.com](http://www.poweredtemplate.com))
- produce quick surveys (eg SurveyMonkey, SurveyGizmo)
- devise e-newsletters (eg MailChimp)
- market events (eg EventBrite)
- set up websites ([www.squarespace.com](http://www.squarespace.com), [www.uk.godaddy.com](http://www.uk.godaddy.com) etc).

If your school uses an online communications facility, ask them to let parents and carers know about your provision through their email/text messaging service.

## Social media

You might also want to use a social media tool such as Twitter, for example, to promote the fact that you are extending your childcare.

As well as being a cheap marketing tool, this can help you:

- keep in touch with families that already use your provision
- tell parents about something new and exciting you are offering.

## 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](http://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](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Learning-Exchange/904749822892733?sk=timeline)

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