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Access to premises

How will the cleaning be managed after the last child goes home – and who will close the school? Who will give an external provider access to the school premises?

Right at the start of planning school-based childcare, practical issues around opening the school, turning the lights on, who cleans what, and closing the school securely at the times required need to be sorted out.

This section outlines a number of approaches that schools have taken to ensure that access to school premises runs smoothly when offering childcare.



Gain the trust of staff

The understanding, trust and goodwill of premises managers and cleaners must be gained to enable the childcare to run smoothly. This is the case whether schools are running the provision themselves or commissioning an external organisation to manage the service.

To get people on board from the start, include school caretakers and other relevant staff in discussions about setting up school-based childcare (the club staff might become keyholders). Regular conversations with these staff members, and including them on your childcare steering group, will ensure that any access issues can be talked through openly and ironed out early.

Have a co-ordinator

Consider appointing a co-ordinator to be the key liaison person between the school and a commissioned third-party childcare provider.



When commissioning a provider, it also helps to have one key person at the organisation to deal with when setting up your provision.

Pascal Suntah, Provision Manager at Fit For Sport, which is the chosen external provider at Crawford Primary School, was responsible for liaising between the school, Family Action and Fit For Sport.

Faye Maher is Federation Manager of the Gypsy Hill Federation in London. She is responsible for all extended services and childcare. Family Action liaised with Faye when developing childcare across a number of schools within the federation.

Having a named person to liaise with meant that Family Action only had to deal with one person, rather than several different people across different schools. Decisions could be taken and issues could be resolved quickly.



Childcare space at Crawford Primary School, London

Offer flexible contracts

Speak to your staff about tweaking their contracts, to enable the school to be easily accessible out of school hours. A free school has negotiated a contract with its premises manager to work from 7.30am to 6.15pm, with a three-hour mid-day break. This ensures that the school building is always open, clean and ready for wraparound childcare activities.

Appoint keyholders

Many schools trust external childcare staff to take care of its premises while using them. This means that the school can feel confident about having the childcare staff open and close the school when necessary.

Have clear agreements

Agreements about cleaning, damage and access can be written into a contract between a school and a provider. There are examples of venue hire contracts, SLAs, etc on the Learning Exchange website: www.learning-exchange.org.uk.

Liaise with the local authority

Some local authorities may require childcare providers to apply for a licence to rent the premises at schools so check with your own local authority what their

regulations are. Before any provision was launched, Family Action liaised with Southwark Local Authority in London, to inform them of the proposed developments in wraparound childcare at Crawford, Redriff and Rye Oak Primary Schools.

Dawn Henry, Project Worker at Family Action, said:

'This worked really well, as they were able to provide insights on what other childcare was available in the borough, as well as the costs. They also helped us promote the location at the schools we were supporting, via the local Families Information Service.'

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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