



Leicestershire
County Council



Building successful relationships with your host school

A Guide for Out of School providers

All children need to play

A successful 'Out of School' (OOS) club ensures that a child's right to play is at the heart of their offer– and there isn't an adult agenda getting in the way of high quality leisure.



All children have a right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and arts.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 31.

Putting a clear framework in place in which your OOS club will run is essential. This guide looks at some of the key areas that should be explored before setting up an OOS club within a school setting, as well as important considerations once it is up and running, to ensure best practice and a high quality provision.

What are the benefits?

[Setting up an OOS club](#) within a school can have many benefits. For example:

- Support for working families
- Increasing the school's intake
- Being able to offer expertise, within the school, on the benefits of play
- Offering familiarity for children with on-site provision
- Smooth transitions through partnership working
- Access to school SENCo and other experts within the school to ensure continuity for every child
- Supporting children's mental health and wellbeing
- Extra support for Pupil Premium children

Planning for a successful OOS club

A clear framework should be put in place to support a successful OOS club provision from set-up and beyond. The following checklist can help you prepare this:

- Identify families' needs and set clear objectives
- Consider the indoor and outdoor space available
- Review materials and equipment
- Choose an experienced and knowledgeable team
- Define policies and procedures
- Maintain clear and regular communications
- Ensure your play team is part of the school team



Families' needs

It is likely that you are considering setting up wrap-around care within a school to help meet parental demand for childcare, particularly from working families.

The 30 Hours offer

Many settings, who are open to pre-school children and are a private business, may also decide to offer the [30 Hours Free Early Education Entitlement](#) which will be of further benefit to working parents. This further increases your flexibility and brings families into the school environment from an earlier age; aiding future transition. Often, the Out of School is the lynchpin between the family, the child and school if they have been within their setting as pre-schoolers, it is vital to be part of that transition process.

Some parents will be entitled to Tax free childcare for children up to 11 years of age. For more information go to www.childcarechoices.gov.uk.



The OOS space

An enabling environment is essential for all children. Think carefully about how you can be [fully inclusive](#) for all children within a play environment.

Providing a safe space, which belongs exclusively to your club, is always the best case scenario. However, with careful organisation, a 'pack-away' setting can also work very well. A successful club has:

- Adequate space for storage
- Enough time to set up and clear away
- Access to the outdoor environment at all times
- Autonomy to use the space as they see fit for the children

The physical space will often be used for other needs throughout the year – for example extra teaching, book clubs, school plays, parents' evenings or discos. Ensure you are kept up to date with the school diary and any changes which may affect the daily running of your club. Regular meetings and open communication with the school business managers and headteacher.

An **effective play space** values children as individuals and offers the opportunity to expand current possibilities.

Children have the **right to choose the activities** and should be allowed to take measured risks. Ask if you can run a play training session with school staff on a training day that includes risky play.

Providing a **safe space** for children where they know they have a **right to play** and where they can access all types of play, enables children to feel **ownership and respect for the environment** in which they play.

Materials and equipment

It is important to have awareness and understanding of materials and equipment that will enhance the OOS club offering.

Loose Parts Play is essential in a successful free-play setting - using any object to be anything or make anything you want. For example: sand, leaves, rocks, ribbons, tyres, pegs, blankets, blocks, beads, cardboard boxes.

Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way and for their own reasons.

Playwork Principles.



OOS Club staff

The Registered Provider / Manager is responsible for [employing](#) high quality staff:

- Choose qualified, experienced and knowledgeable play staff who have an understanding of the playwork principles or are willing to undertake further [training](#) to work within your setting
- Ensure your OOS staff have a positive attitude and have access to training. Practitioners need to be able to create a space where children feel welcome and where they have the freedom to play as they wish without adult restriction.
- Introduce your play team and all new play staff to the school staff so they feel part of the school team; a new staff group within a school needs to be valued as part of their staff and community, even if you are a private provider. Invite school staff to meetings, training and social events.

Policies and Procedures

You will need to consider OOS policies, procedures, insurance, food hygiene, first aid and much more in regards to [policies and procedures](#). Visit Leicestershire County Council [OOS Guidance Pages](#) for further information.

Ofsted

Ofsted have noted the following Good or Outstanding Leicestershire out of school clubs on school sites

Staff have forged exceptionally strong links with the school, other professionals and external agencies. The strong focus on partnership working ensures all children's needs are well met. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are exceptionally well supported.

Partnership with the host school is strong. Staff work with the children in their school. This helps to ensure children experience good levels of continuity.

Some staff also work at the host school, so children are familiar with them. This helps them to settle when they first attend.



Communication

Clear communication is the foundation of every effective relationship. If you set out clear channels of interaction between the school and your club, you will build a successful and flourishing out of school club with safe, happy and engaged children; motivated and enthusiastic club staff and satisfied families. Good practice involves:

- Planning how you intend to work and communicate with your host school, staff, parents and other professionals as an OOS Club.
- Scheduling regular meetings between your manager or Registered Provider and a lead member in the school or governor.
- Keeping communication open and allowing the chance for either party to celebrate successes, address concerns, plan changes and recognise ways to support one another.



Staff awareness

Before your OOS club opens, meet with staff and provide training about the OOS club and the impact on a school. You might suggest the school may like to invite a play specialist in on your Teacher Training Day to explain what a free-play setting may look like in reality!

To build a platform for success, staff should understand (and be on board with) what free-play is and that the rules and boundaries needed in school time are not the same as before or after school or during holiday times.

It is of paramount importance that school staff respect [playworkers as professionals and specialists in their own right](#). If they feel worried about an activity (e.g. tree climbing, rough and tumble) encourage them to speak with the club manager so they can understand the [benefits of play](#).



Additional resources

Further information can be found at:

[Leicestershire County Council - Out of School resources](#)

[Play England](#)

[The Playwork Foundation](#)

[The children's commissioner report on playing out](#)