



Opening School Facilities

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SECTION 1



Why Schools
Should Open
Their Facilities?

FOREWORD

The Chief Medical Officers of the UK recommend that all children and young people, aged 5-18, engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day. For disabled children and young people, this should be at least 20 minutes daily. Toddlers and preschool children should aim for 180 minutes of physical activity each day. Despite these guidelines, too many children remain physically inactive, a trend that often continues into adulthood.

The Opening School Facilities (OSF) Programme (2022 – 2025), launched by the Department for Education, has played a crucial role in expanding access to physical activity. By enabling schools to open their sports facilities beyond traditional hours, the programme has allowed both students and the wider community to engage in physical activity.

The insights, checklists, and case studies included in this toolkit have been shaped by valuable contributions from a diverse group of schools and partners. Their shared experiences and recommendations have helped create a resource that will continue to support schools long after the programme concludes.

While financial investment has served as an important catalyst, it is the collaboration among national consortia partners, strengthened by deeper local relationships, that will ensure the long-term sustainability of these efforts.

Through this collective commitment, we aim to foster a nation of active, thriving schools and Well Schools, where physical activity is at the heart of every school and community. In doing so, we can build a brighter future, giving all young people the opportunity to thrive through sport, play, and movement.

Emily Reynolds, Director Children Young People, Youth Sport Trust

Schools are more than just places of education—they are the heart of their communities, bringing people together and creating opportunities for connection, learning, and well-being. By opening their doors beyond the school day, schools can be a force for good, providing safe and welcoming spaces for physical activity, social interaction, and community engagement.

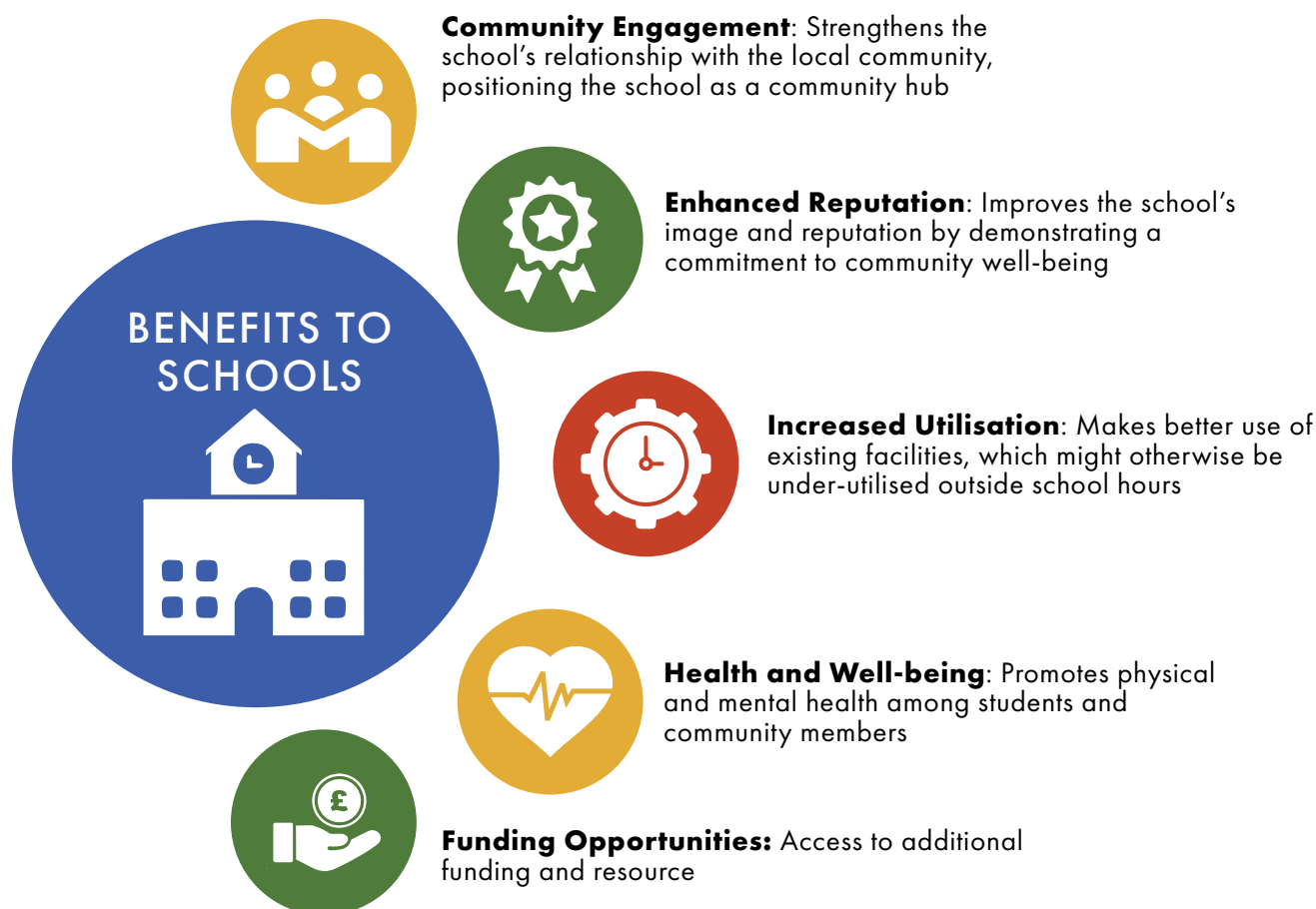
The Opening School Facilities (OSF) programme, launched in 2023, was designed to help schools unlock their potential as community hubs, ensuring that sports halls, playgrounds, pools, and other facilities are accessible to local people. While OSF funding will not be continuing, this toolkit has been created to provide schools with practical guidance and insight on how they can continue to open their facilities in a simple and effective way.

By embracing this opportunity, schools can:

- **Strengthen community bonds**, bringing together families, local groups, and young people in a shared space.
- **Encourage physical activity for all**, helping people lead healthier and more active lives.
- **Drive social cohesion and community pride**, ensuring that school facilities serve as a catalyst for positive change.
- **Maximise the use of existing resources**, ensuring valuable spaces do not go unused.

This toolkit outlines the key benefits of opening school facilities, provides practical steps for getting started, and highlights ways to develop sustainable partnerships that will ensure these opportunities continue for years to come.

Whether you are new to the concept or looking to expand your offer, this guide will help you navigate the process with confidence and make a lasting impact on your community.



Why Schools Should Open Their Facilities to the Local Community

Opening your school facilities to the local community is a transformative opportunity that extends far beyond the school gates. By embracing this initiative, your school can become a vibrant community hub, fostering stronger relationships and promoting the well-being of all residents.

- **Strengthening Community Bonds:** Schools are at the heart of our communities. By opening your facilities, you create a welcoming space where families, children, and local groups can come together, fostering a sense of unity and belonging. This initiative helps build trust and collaboration between the school and the community, enhancing the school's reputation as a cornerstone of local life.
- **Promoting Health and Well-being:** Access to sports and physical activity facilities is crucial for promoting a healthy lifestyle. By providing a safe and accessible environment for physical activities, your school can play a pivotal role in improving the physical and mental health of community members. This not only benefits the individuals but also contributes to a healthier, more active community.
- **Maximising Resource Utilisation:** School facilities often remain under-utilised outside of school hours. Opening these spaces to the community ensures that valuable resources are used efficiently, providing maximum benefit to the local area. This can also lead to potential revenue streams through facility hire, helping to support and sustain school programs.
- **Enhancing Educational Outcomes:** Engaging with the community through shared use of facilities can enrich the educational experience for students. It provides opportunities for students to interact with diverse groups, learn new skills, and develop a sense of civic responsibility. Additionally, it can create pathways for young leaders and volunteers, fostering personal growth and leadership skills.
- **Access to Funding and Support:** Opening school's facilities can allow access to financial support for improving and maintaining them, ensuring they remain safe and welcoming for all users. Additionally, there is a network of support and resources available to help schools successfully implement and sustain this approach.
- **Access to OSF Partners:** Partner organisations provide comprehensive support to schools participating in OSF to build and develop a sustainable offer of activities including:
 - Youth engagement and voice
 - Training and development
 - Community consultation and co-design
 - Resources and toolkits
 - Funding support
 - Research and insight
 - Local support, collaboration and networking
 - Sustainability planning

- **Supports the Role of School Trusts as Civic Institutions:** A civic mindset involves looking beyond the school to understand and address the pressures on children, young people, and communities and requires collaboration with other civic organisations to tackle complex social issues. OSF aligns closely with the civic mindset and community approach through themes such as:
 - Community engagement
 - Active participation
 - Shared spaces
 - Inclusivity and access for all
 - Youth involvement
 - Social cohesion and building relationships
 - Health and well-being
 - Civic responsibility
 - Empowerment
 - Sustainable impact

You can read more about school trusts as civic institutions here: [School Trusts as Civic Institutions](#)

By opening your school facilities to the community, you are not just providing a space for physical activity; you are creating a legacy of community engagement, health, and well-being. This initiative is a powerful way to demonstrate your school's commitment to the broader community, making a lasting impact on the lives of those you serve.





SECTION 2



Getting Started

[You can find a Quick Start Checklist here](#)

Opening school facilities to the community can be a transformative initiative, but ensuring a smooth and successful launch requires careful planning and preparation. This section provides a step-by-step checklist to help schools assess their facilities, meet legal requirements, engage stakeholders, and develop a strong workforce and management plan.

By following this structured approach, schools can maximise the use of their spaces, build strong community connections, and create a sustainable model for long-term success. From securing the right insurance policies to developing an effective promotional strategy, this checklist will guide schools through the essential steps needed to get started.

For those looking for a quick and easy reference, click the link to access a Quick Start Checklist that summarises the key actions required.

Facility Availability and Suitability

- ☐ **Assess Facility Availability:** Identify spaces such as sports halls, classrooms, or outdoor areas.
- ☐ **Assess Facility Condition:** Is the facility in good repair and safe for use?
- ☐ **Accessibility:** Are the facilities accessible to all community members? Do you need to make any reasonable adjustments? [Access to and use of buildings: Approved Document M - GOV.UK](#)
- ☐ **Capacity:** Can the facility safely accommodate the expected number of participants?
- ☐ **Equipment:** Is the necessary equipment available and in good condition?
- ☐ **Scheduling:** Are there available time slots that do not conflict with school activities? Use a scheduling tool (see section 6)
- ☐ **Security:** Are there adequate security measures in place for after-hours use?
- ☐ **Parking:** Is there sufficient parking available for community users?

Legal Obligations

- ☐ **Insurance Policies:** Are there appropriate insurance policies in place to cover after-hours use? [Sport England - Use our School - Legal & Governance](#)
- ☐ **Liability Coverage:** Does the school have liability coverage for injuries or damages that may occur? [Sport England - Use our School - Legal & Governance](#)
- ☐ **Joint Use Agreements:** Are there agreements in place with local authorities or organisations for shared use of the facilities? (See section 6 for a template agreement).
- ☐ **Compliance with Regulations:** Are all activities compliant with local authority and government regulations?
- ☐ **Risk Assessments:** Have risk assessments been conducted for all activities and facilities? (see section 6 for template risk documents).

Engaging Stakeholders

- ☐ **Identify Stakeholders:** Have all relevant stakeholders (e.g., parents, local community groups and sports clubs, school staff, charities) been identified? [Sport England - Use our School - Who can Help.](#)
- ☐ **Communication Plan:** Is there a clear plan for communicating with stakeholders about the plans for your facilities?
- ☐ **Feedback Mechanism:** Is there a system in place for collecting and addressing stakeholder feedback, as you continue the approach to opening your facilities?
- ☐ **Partnerships:** Are there partnerships you could explore with local organisations to support the opening of school facilities?

Planning Effective Youth and Community Voice

- ☐ **Youth Engagement:** Are there opportunities for young people to be involved in planning and decision-making? OSF partners [Youth Sport Trust](#) and [StreetGames](#) both have toolkits to support youth voice.
- ☐ **Consideration of StreetGames:** '5 Rights to Doorstep Sport' could be used to formulate the youth voice sessions, understanding what young people feel is the Right Place, Price, Time, Style of sessions and delivered by the Right People.
- ☐ **Community Engagement:** Has the local community been consulted to understand the needs and preferences of the community? Are you designing your offer based on this feedback.
- ☐ **Advisory Group:** Is there an advisory group that includes young people and community representatives? Are you taking a co-design approach?
- ☐ **Regular Meetings:** Are there regular meetings scheduled to discuss your approach and ongoing input?



Develop a Workforce Plan

- ☐ **Existing or New Staff:** Do you have existing staff that can support OSF? Do you need to recruit staff, young leaders and volunteers?
- ☐ **Leadership:** Do you have an identifiable lead for opening and maximising school facilities, do they have experience in programme management, budgeting, decision making?
- ☐ **Activation and Coaching:** Who will deliver the activities outside of school hours?
- ☐ **Facility Management:** Who will oversee the facility bookings, maintenance, safety and other logistics?
- ☐ **Community Engagement:** Do you have someone who can authentically engage with the school and the local community, listening, gaining feedback and advocating for their needs?
- ☐ **Volunteer and Young Leader Development:** Do you have processes in place to effectively recruit, support, develop and mentor young leaders and volunteers?
- ☐ **Health and Safety:** Who is 1st aid trained? Who will oversee risk assessment procedures?
- ☐ **Data Tracking and Monitoring:** How your facilities are being used?
- ☐ **Skills Audit:** Do you have a way to identify the skills and attributes your workforce needs? Can you use this to inform recruitment and development plans?
- ☐ **Training and Continuous Learning:** Do you have an induction plan, how will you match training to gaps and needs of staff and volunteers, have you considered the minimum standards needed for roles? [StreetGames Training Academy](#) can support with training and workforce development. See section 6 – Resources and Tools, for Skills Audit Template.

Set a Management Plan

- ☐ **Establish Booking Procedures:** Create a booking system, develop a booking policy, agree an approval process.
- ☐ **Operational Hours:** Define operational hours, be flexible to meet the needs of audiences.
- ☐ **Define Oversight Responsibilities:** Assign roles for overseeing facilities, ensure staff are fully trained, ensure safety and security processes are implemented [Sport England - Use our School - Getting Started](#)

Promote Your Facilities

- ☐ **Create Social Media Accounts:** Set up accounts on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X to reach a broad audience. Post regular updates and engage with followers.
- ☐ **Newsletters:** Include information about the facilities and their availability in the school's regular newsletter. Partner with local organisations to feature your facilities in their newsletters.
- ☐ **Community Networks and Partnerships:** Build partnerships with local community groups, sports clubs, and organisations to promote the use of your facilities.
- ☐ **Flyers and Posters:** Distribute flyers and posters in community centres, libraries, and local businesses.
- ☐ **Events:** Host events to showcase the facilities and engage with the local community and potential partners and other stakeholders. [Sport England - Use our School - Marketing](#)

Plan for Long-Term Use

- ☐ **Start Small:** Begin with a pilot programme to test the use of facilities and gather feedback from users. Consult and co-design the offer with the school community and local community.
- ☐ **Continuous Improvement:** Conduct regular consultation with participants about their experiences and suggestions for improvement. Consult with those not yet accessing to discover what needs they have. Develop iterations of your offer based on feedback.
- ☐ **Scale Up Over Time:** Gradually expand the range of activities and services offered based on demand and feedback. Increase availability by extending operational hours and access to facilities as your approach grows.
- ☐ **Explore Linked Opportunities:** Apply for relevant funding for your school/area to support the sustainability of opening your facilities and providing additional services. Explore partnerships with local businesses and organisations to support and enhance your approach.





SECTION 3



Overcoming Challenges

Successfully opening school facilities to the community comes with its own set of challenges, but with the right strategies in place, schools can find practical solutions to financial, staffing, legal, and engagement hurdles.

This section outlines common challenges schools may face when opening their facilities, along with potential solutions to help navigate these obstacles effectively. From securing funding and managing staffing constraints to attracting participants and ensuring compliance, these solutions are designed to support schools in making their facilities accessible, sustainable, and beneficial for both students and the wider community.

At the end of this section, you will also find a directory of organisations and websites that can provide further guidance and resources to help schools successfully manage their OSF initiatives.

SOLUTIONS FOR COMMON CHALLENGES WHEN OPENING SCHOOLS FACILITIES

Financial Constraints

- **Grants and Funding:** Apply for grants from local government, other national programmes, Sport England, and other organisations dedicated to community sports and physical activity.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborate with local businesses and sports clubs for sponsorships and shared resources.
- **Fundraising Events:** Organise community events such as fun runs, family sports days and other events to raise funds.
- **Pricing and Membership Fees:** Offer tiered pricing, consider introducing a nominal membership fee for community users to help cover costs.
- **Energy Efficiency:** Implement energy-saving measures like LED lighting, smart meters, motion sensors for lights and programmable thermostats. Encourage energy saving behaviours in school staff and pupils.

Staffing Limitations

- **Volunteers:** Recruit volunteers from the local community, including young volunteers and leaders, link with community organisations, colleges and universities in your area. Consider where you can automate processes, such as booking facilities (there is a list of some booking platforms in section 6 - 'Resources and Tools').
- **Student Involvement:** Engage students as young leaders and assistants, providing them with valuable experience, consider a youth leadership programme of development.
- **Part-Time Staff:** Hire part-time or seasonal staff to manage peak times and specific events.
- **Training and other Continuous Learning:** Offer training and development opportunities to existing staff to enhance their skills and abilities.

Attracting Participants/Customers

- **Purposeful Engagement:** Regularly consult with participants and local community to improve and tailor the offerings to their needs, taking a co-design approach.
- **Marketing Campaigns:** Use social media, local media and community bulletin boards to promote your facilities and programmes.
- **Community Events:** Host open days, free taster sessions, and community sports events to attract interest.
- **Incentives:** Offer discounts or loyalty programmes for regular participants.
- **Collaborations:** Partner with other local schools, sports clubs, and community organisations to reach a wider audience.

Legal and Liability Concerns

- **Insurance:** Ensure comprehensive insurance coverage for all activities and participants and use pre-designed templates for things like rental agreements.
- **Risk Assessments:** Conduct regular risk assessments, keep a risk register and implement safety protocols.
- **Training:** Provide staff and volunteers with minimum operating standards training on health and safety and first aid, as well as relevant role-specific training for competency.
- **Compliance:** Stay updated with local and national regulations to ensure compliance as well as any funding specific regulations.

Maintenance Needs

- **Preventive Maintenance:** Implement a preventive maintenance schedule to address issues before they become major problems.
- **Community Involvement:** Organise community clean-up and maintenance days to help the upkeep of facilities.
- **Outsourcing:** Consider outsourcing maintenance tasks to specialised companies for cost efficiency.
- **Funding for Upgrades:** Apply for grants specifically aimed at facility improvements and maintenance.

Community Engagement

- **Workshops and Training:** Offer workshops on effective community engagement for staff and volunteers.
- **Advisory Committees:** Establish advisory committees that include local and school community members to provide input and guidance.
- **Consultations:** Conduct consultation, surveys, focus groups etc to gather community input and understand their needs.
- **Partnerships:** Partner with local organisations and community groups to enhance engagement efforts.
- **Regular Communication:** Maintain regular communication with the community through newsletters, social media, and open meetings.





SECTION 4



Building Community Partnerships

Strong community partnerships are essential for ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of Opening School Facilities (OSF) initiatives. By collaborating with local organisations, sports clubs, charities, and businesses, schools can expand their impact, share resources, and create more opportunities for young people and their communities to be active.

In this section, we explore practical strategies for identifying, developing, and maintaining successful partnerships. From networking and engaging stakeholders to defining mutual benefits and ensuring clear communication, these approaches will help schools build strong, sustainable relationships that benefit both students and the wider community.

Collaborating with community partners enables schools to efficiently utilise additional resources and expertise, enhancing program quality and offering a broader range of services. This shared responsibility allows school staff to focus on core educational tasks while ensuring comprehensive support for students. Such partnerships encourage stronger community ties and create sustainable programs that thrive, with often limited school resources, ensuring facilities continue to provide opportunities for physical activity, community engagement, and serving local needs well into the future.



TOP TIPS FOR BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Identifying Potential Partners



Asset Based Community Development Approach

Identify the strengths and assets in your local community groups, sport, fitness and physical activity clubs and other activities clubs, charities, schools, parks, social organisations, neighbourhood associations, infrastructure, after-school programmes, government entities and libraries

Engage Stakeholders

Involve board, local stakeholders and school pupils and staff to explore potential collaborations within their networks

Networking Events

Attend local events, business networks and community and stakeholder meetings to discover potential partners

Defining Mutual Benefits



Shared Goals

Ensure that both the school and the community partner have the same goals and objectives or that they compliment each other

Benefits

Clearly agree and outline the benefits for all partners, such as branding opportunities for businesses or additional experiences for students and community members

Formal Agreements

Create formal agreements that outline the roles, responsibilities, and benefits for each partner (you can find a template agreement in Section 6 – 'Tools and Resources')

Maintaining Regular Communication



Communication Plan

Develop a communication plan that includes regular updates, meetings, and feedback sessions

Multiple Channels

Use various communication methods such as emails, newsletters, social media, and face-to-face meetings to keep all stakeholders informed

Transparency

Maintain open and transparent communication to build trust and ensure all parties are on the same page

Developing Shared Goals



Collaborative Planning

Involve all stakeholders in the planning process to ensure that the goals are mutually beneficial and achievable

Regular Reviews

Plan regular reviews to assess progress towards the shared goals and make necessary adjustments

Flexibility

Be open to adapting aims and goals as the partnership evolves and new opportunities arise

The image is a cover page for a document. On the left side, there is a vertical yellow bar with a white dashed line running down its length. To the right of this is a vertical red bar, followed by a vertical blue bar. The main part of the image is a black and white photograph of three people holding hands in a circle. The people are wearing hard hats, and one person has a star tattoo on their arm. The text 'SECTION 5' is at the top, and 'Sustainability Practices' is at the bottom.

SECTION 5

Sustainability Practices

Ensuring the long-term success of Opening School Facilities initiatives requires careful planning, resourcefulness, and a commitment to sustainable practices. Schools that effectively open their doors to the community must consider how to maintain financial stability, engage the local community, and build a strong workforce to keep their facilities running smoothly beyond the initial funding period.

This section explores practical strategies for sustainability, including revenue-generating ideas, ongoing community engagement, effective budgeting, and workforce planning. By implementing these approaches, schools can maximise the impact of their facilities, create lasting opportunities for community activity, and ensure their programmes remain viable for years to come.

From hosting events and developing membership packages to securing external funding and fostering an inclusive workforce, the ideas outlined here provide a roadmap for schools looking to sustain and grow their facility-opening initiatives.

SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES FOR OPENING SCHOOL FACILITIES

Revenue-Generating Ideas

- **Host Events:** Host community events, fairs, markets etc, during out of school hours and school holidays.
- **Membership Packages:** Consider packages for individuals, families, students, off-peak, senior. Also consider if you could offer basic and premium memberships.
- **Advertising Space:** Sell advertising space on school fences or newsletters to local businesses.
- **Catering:** Consider whether you can use your exciting catering facilities to provide a community café while facilities are open to the public.
- **Non-Sporting Activities:** Could you open your facilities to groups needing space for music, drama, craft activities and more.

Regular Community Needs Reviews

- **Surveys and Questionnaires:** Regularly distribute surveys to parents, students, and community members to gather feedback on their needs and preferences.
- **Focus Groups:** Conduct focus groups with different audiences or segments of the community to gain deeper insights into their needs and how the school can address them.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborate with local organisations to understand wider community needs and how a partnership approach could address them.

Budgeting for Sustainability

- **Detailed Budget Planning:** Create a detailed budget that includes all potential income sources and expenses related to opening school facilities. Ensure it is clear who has oversight and approval of this.
- **Cost-Benefit Analysis:** Perform regular cost-benefit analyses to ensure that the revenue generated from facility use outweighs the costs.
- **Reserves:** Build a reserve fund to cover unexpected expenses and ensure financial stability.
- **Funding Applications:** Apply for grants and funding opportunities from organisations like Sport England, the National Lottery Community Fund and other local initiatives. You can find some links to funding sources in Section 6, 'Resources and Tools'.

Sustainable Workforce Plan

- **Staff, Volunteers, Young Leaders:** Consider how to best recruit, engage and develop staff, volunteers and young leaders. Each of these groups will play different roles and will have different needs, but investing in their support and development will create a sustainable workforce.
- **Training and Development:** Ensure the workforce have an effective induction, consider buddy and mentoring arrangements. Provide regular training and professional development opportunities for staff and volunteers and young leaders. Link with local and national organisations to access development opportunities and support.
- **Inclusive Culture:** Create a culture that values diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. The workforce should feel valued and should feel recognised for their contribution. Promote communication and provide support systems for mental and physical well-being.





SECTION 6



Resources and Tools

Throughout the toolkit there has been reference to a number of tools and resources, compiled here. This is not an exhaustive list and it does not act as an endorsement to any of the organisations or services.

The following templates are only suggestions, you should carefully review to ensure they meet the needs of your school. There are several organisations that specialise in school based templates, you can find reference to them in the Directory.

You may also find that other schools may have templates available for sharing.

The Sport England [Use our School](#) tool can provide a lot of guidance specific to opening school facilities, including policy checklists and guidance on risk management. If you have read the tool kit and want some local support, utilise the Active Partnerships interactive map to find your local [Active Partnership](#).

DOCUMENTS

Templates

[Facility Booking Form](#)
[Partnership Agreement Form](#)
[Memorandum of Understanding](#)
[Maintenance Schedule](#)
[Risk Assessment 1](#)
[Risk Assessment 2](#)
[Risk Register](#)
[Skills Audit Template](#)

Quick Start Checklist

[Please see Checklist here](#)



Further Reading

[Access to and use of buildings: Approved Document M - GOV.UK](#)

[CIMSPA 2023 Workforce Insights Report](#)

[CIMSPA Endorsed Training Directory](#)

[CIMSPA professional workforce standards](#)

[Developing a Risk Register](#)

[End of OSF - Report 2023 - 2024](#)

[Guide to Setting Up Partnerships](#)

[Guide to Writing a MOU](#)

[Holiday activities and food programme 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

[Partnership Models Guide](#)

[Safe Practice Resources - UK Coaching](#)

[School Guidance Sheet](#)

[School Risk Assessment Template](#)

[School Trusts as Civic Trusts](#)

[Sport England - Use our School](#)

[StreetGames - 7 Segments](#)

[StreetGames - Lessons of Young Volunteers](#)

[StreetGames - Research & Insights](#)

[StreetGames - Youth Voice Toolkit](#)

[Youth Sport Trust - Knowledge Bank](#)

[Youth Sport Trust - Youth Voice Resources](#)

External Networks

[Active Partnership Network](#)

[CIMSPA Local Skills Boards](#)

[Community Leisure UK](#) - find local community organisations close to you

[Localgiving](#) - find local community organisations close to you

[Schools Active Movement](#)

DIGITAL TOOLS

Digital Platforms for School Facility Bookings

[Skedda](#): a user-friendly platform designed for booking and managing spaces. It offers features like online payments, custom booking rules, and integrations with other tools.

[classroombookings](#): an open-source room booking system specifically designed for schools. It offers cloud hosting and self-hosting options.

[SchoolBooking](#): a platform tailored for schools, offering room and resource booking, parent-teacher meeting scheduling, and more.

[School Hire](#): a platform that allows users to find, book, and pay for various facilities such as sports halls, conference rooms, event venues, and more, available for hire across the UK.

[Bookteq](#): a venue management software designed to simplify the booking and management of sports facilities and event spaces. The platform is used by schools, local authorities, sports clubs, and trusts.

[Pitchbooking](#): a platform for managing sports facilities and events trusted by sports clubs, schools, councils, and commercial hubs.

[MIDAS](#): a web-based room booking and resource scheduling system with a focus on flexibility and customisation.

[Ecobook](#): a solution for managing spaces and resources across large campuses, with features like integration with Office 365 and advanced settings for space management.

Other Digital Tools

[SurveyMonkey](#): A popular online survey platform that allows users to create, distribute, and analyse surveys.

[Google Forms](#): A free tool from Google that enables users to create and analyse surveys and forms easily.





SECTION 7



Inspiring Stories

We are incredibly grateful to the schools that have taken the time to share their experiences and successes as part of the Opening School Facilities (OSF) programme. These stories highlight the dedication, creativity, and commitment of schools in using their facilities to increase opportunities for young people and their communities to be active.

Through innovative programmes, strengthened partnerships, and a deep understanding of their students' needs, these schools have created inclusive, engaging, and sustainable opportunities for physical activity. From enhancing accessibility in swimming facilities to introducing new activities like skateboarding and cycling, each story reflects the positive impact that opening school facilities can have on young people's lives.

A huge thank you to all the schools that have shared their journeys—we hope these stories inspire others to explore new ways of making sport and physical activity accessible to all.



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

KENT

Pedal Power: Increasing Physical Activity and Community Engagement at a primary school, Thanet

Background & Identified Need

During a visit to a primary school in Thanet, as part of the Youth Sport Trust (YST) Development Manager's local insight work, discussions with the Headteacher highlighted several key challenges impacting physical activity provision and engagement in the school:

- Limited physical activity opportunities for pupils
- Low parental engagement, except during Sports Day
- Persistent absenteeism (26%), though improving
- Staffing shortages, with difficulty recruiting teachers in the area
- Struggles to attract pupils, due to a low birth rate and competition from a newly opened school nearby
- Limited access to bikes, with many children unable to ride
- Underutilisation of local outdoor spaces, including the beach and nearby forests

Recognising an opportunity to increase activity levels, build community connections, and create sustainable change, the YST Development Manager developed a tailored cycling project in partnership with the school.

Project Development & Funding

To bring this initiative to life, the YST Development Manager engaged key local stakeholders, including the Active Partnership and Active Travel Team, securing £4,000 in OSF funding. The funding supported a school cycling programme designed to provide pupils with access to bikes, training, and structured opportunities to learn and develop cycling confidence.

Project Implementation

Learn to Ride Programme

- Pupils who had never ridden a bike before were given the opportunity to learn through dedicated cycling lessons with local instructors.
- A 12-week structured programme took place in the school, with bikes available for pupils to borrow.

Equipment Provision

- The school purchased 10 bikes and helmets, along with playground equipment to support ongoing cycling sessions.

Cycle Club & Confidence Programme

- After-school cycling sessions were introduced, providing additional opportunities for pupils to practise.
- Once pupils had learned to ride, they could progress to a Cycle Confidence Club, offering sessions aligned with national Bikeability standards.

Parental Engagement Workshops

- A key focus was building parental involvement, as past efforts to engage parents had been challenging.
- Workshops on bike maintenance and learn-to-ride sessions for parents were introduced to encourage long-term participation.
- Parents were provided with cycling kits to support bike maintenance at home.

Cycle Celebration Day & Parent Engagement Event

- On 16th December, a Cycle Celebration Day was held, marking the culmination of the project.
- Pupils showcased their new cycling skills to parents, creating a sense of pride and achievement.
- The event saw record-high parental engagement, strengthening relationships between the school and families.
- A bike rickshaw, Christmas music, and a raffle for refurbished bikes made the event a festive and memorable experience.
- Community Partnerships & Sustainability

Local Partnerships

- Instructors were sourced from the local area, ensuring strong community ties.
- The Bike Shed, a local bike shop, supplied and maintained bikes, committing to ongoing support for the school.
- The local council and Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) Headteacher attended the event, leading to discussions about expanding the model across other schools.

Cycle Re-Cycle Scheme

- A community donation initiative encouraged families and local partners to donate unwanted bikes.
- The Bike Shed refurbished the bikes, which were then donated to the school or raffled to families.
- This scheme will continue three times a year, ensuring sustainable access to bikes.

Outcomes & Impact

- All participating pupils can now ride a bike and have access to loan bikes through the school.
- The highest-ever parental engagement event at the primary school, strengthening school-parent relationships.
- New community partnerships established, with a wider multi-school cycling strategy in development.
- The initiative boosted the profile of the YST Development Manager, helping to build trust with headteachers, parents, and pupils in the area.

Looking Ahead

This project has demonstrated the power of collaboration in tackling barriers to physical activity. With strong community backing, parental involvement, and a sustainable cycling infrastructure in place, the primary school is well-positioned to continue creating opportunities for active, engaged, and confident young cyclists for years to come.

CASE STUDY 2:

REVENUE GENERATION

WESTFIELD ACADEMY

Multi-Activity and Community Club Links at Westfield Academy

Background & Identified Need

Westfield Academy recognised a need to extend physical activity opportunities for their students, especially before and after the traditional school day. They also wanted to strengthen connections with community clubs and provide more consistent routines for pupils who were struggling with punctuality and engagement.

Key challenges included:

- Limited opportunities for structured activities outside of class time
- Low engagement during early parts of the school day
- Underused facilities outside of school hours
- A need to build stronger links with local clubs and activity providers

The school, supported by Opening School Facilities (OSF) funding, aimed to address these challenges with three targeted initiatives.

Project Development & Funding

Westfield Academy secured OSF funding to deliver three complementary projects designed to enhance student wellbeing, increase facility usage, and strengthen links with local community activity providers.

Project Implementation

After-School Multi-Sport Programme

- Extended the school day until 5.00pm for Westfield students
- Offered a range of multi-sport and informal activity sessions
- Encouraged students to transition into local community clubs and organisations

Active Breakfast Club

- Provided supervised access to the sports hall and gym before school for informal games and physical activity
- Included a healthy breakfast to support better nutrition and concentration
- Helped improve timekeeping and early day engagement for pupils with previously inconsistent attendance

Community Club Engagement

- Developed stronger links with local clubs and groups
- Promoted increased use of school facilities by external community organisations
- Enabled pupils to access further physical activity opportunities outside of school

"Breakfast Club in particular has helped a number of previously 'inconsistent' young people with their timekeeping and engagement with the early part of the day."

"Before school used to be really boring – just hanging around outside. Now I can come inside, play a few games, meet people. I'd never played table tennis before, but now I love it and play most days. I leave school this year and I might try to find a place to keep playing."

Community Partnerships & Sustainability

Income Generation

- Facility use and after-school provision are helping to generate a surplus
- This additional income is supporting long-term sustainability beyond the OSF funding window

Staff Engagement & Relationships

- Informal morning activities provided opportunities for teaching assistants to connect with pupils differently
- These relationships positively impacted behaviour and engagement during formal lessons

"I'm no longer the enemy!" – Teaching assistant on how Breakfast Club changed student dynamics in the classroom

Outcomes & Impact

- Stronger connections with local clubs and community provider
- Increased pupil engagement during school hours
- Improved staff-student relationships, particularly in early-morning sessions
- Broadened access to physical activity before, during, and after school
- Generated additional income for reinvestment in school activities

Looking Ahead

Westfield Academy's three-pronged approach has created a stronger culture of physical activity and community engagement. By blending informal opportunities with structured links to clubs and support services, the school has developed a model that other settings can learn from – one that supports both educational outcomes and sustainable community collaboration.

SCHOOL TO COMMUNITY CLUB LINK

LEAP INCLUSIVE CYCLING

A family bike ride is something many people can take for granted.

However if you're one of the 46,000 disabled people who live across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes (that's 1 in 5 people) a bike ride can be harder than you think, and much harder than it should be.

After identifying the barriers to cycling facing disabled people Active in the Community CIC (AIRC) set about creating accessible and affordable opportunities.

They invested in a range of adapted cycles including a tandem, hand bikes, trikes and a wheelchair carrier, then trained volunteers on how to use the cycles and lead engaging sessions.

This first pioneering inclusive cycling session at Marlow Athletics Track proved incredibly popular. However transport remained an issue for disabled people in the north of the county and so a partnership between Leap and AIRC was created to widen provision through the Opening School Facilities fund (OSF).

The new venue needed to be accessible, level and have plenty of space. The Senior Leadership team at Kingsbrook School (part of Insignis Academy Trust) in Aylesbury was in discussions with Leap and Active in the Community about the Opening Schools Facility project and they had the ideal facilities.

Who were the key players and what did they bring?

AIRC

Active In the Community (AIRC) provide fully staffed facility management for schools as well as running community projects to make physical activity accessible and affordable. They brought a proven concept of inclusive cycling to the project, having tested it in Marlow. In addition, AIRC recruited and trained the volunteers and secured investment for cycle storage.

The Kingsbrook School (Insignis Academy Trust)

Providing the fantastic facility and commitment to engaging and serving their local community.

Leap

Connections, expertise and investment. Through the Opening School Facilities Fund, Leap were able to ensure the right range and number of cycles were purchased to enable the session to take place.

"This was a fantastic partnership to build on the brilliant work of Active in the Community. The Department of Education Opening School Facilities programme enabled us to expand this inclusive cycling session to benefit a new community."

Rhiannon Smith - Development Manager, Leap

"Working with AIRC and Leap has been brilliant. They've helped us provide a much needed inclusive cycling session which serves our local community and really positions us as a destination activity. The partnership meant setting up and managing the session hasn't been too onerous on staff."

Ali Arber - Wellbeing Lead, Insignis Academy Trust

"We're delighted with this collaboration, it's enabled us to expand the opportunities for inclusive cycling in Buckinghamshire and experience the positive impact these sessions have on participants and their families."

Amelia Evans - Physical Activity Programme Officer, AITC

The Right Space

The space needed to be safe, supportive and accessible.

The right facilities for inclusive cycling can be difficult to find but opening up Kingsbrook School's facilities was the perfect solution.

A coordinated approach and agreed terms meant opening the Kingsbrook facilities had minimal impact for school staff.

Truly Inclusive

A range of adapted cycles were purchased that could cater for individuals with a variety of impairments, special educational needs (SEN) and those who wouldn't otherwise be able to cycle using a standard bike.

These included a tandem, hand bikes, trikes and a wheelchair carrier.

Staff were trained how to use the cycles and empower participants and their families to do the same.

Bringing along Family

It was decided that each rider could bring two family members to the session, so they could participate together. This reduces the nerves that some might have about joining a group and it encourages families to get active together.

Parents commented that it was rare for siblings with and without a disability to be able to participate in an activity together. The tandem and wheelchair carrier even allow two people to share the experience on the same bike!

"Firstly, thank you for making these sessions inclusive for the entire family! The space at Kingsbrook School is perfect and a very good range of cycles. Very happy with this activity."

Parent of participant

"My little boy was very nervous at the start of the session and he didn't have the confidence to get on a trike. He lacks confidence because he has difficulties balancing but because of the straps and because he was close to the ground he developed his confidence.

After 5 minutes, we helped him by holding on to him and then for the rest of the session he was very happily riding round on his own and was extremely confident by the end. My little boy really benefited from this session today, thank you very much."

Parent of participant

"Safe, big space for our kids to do something that is difficult to do elsewhere and requires specialist cycles."

Parent of participant

CLOSING SUMMARY

Schools have a unique and powerful role in their communities. By opening their doors beyond the school day, they provide safe, inclusive, and accessible spaces where people can come together, be active, and build connections. The Opening School Facilities (OSF) programme has demonstrated how schools can positively impact health, well-being, and social cohesion by making their facilities available to local communities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS TOOLKIT

- **Strengthening Community Bonds** – Schools are at the heart of their communities. By welcoming local people into their facilities, they create a sense of belonging and connection that benefits both students and families.
- **Promoting Health and Well-being** – Access to school spaces encourages physical activity for all, helping to improve both mental and physical well-being across the community.
- **Creating Sustainable Opportunities** – With careful planning, schools can develop long-term strategies to keep their facilities open, whether through partnerships, revenue generation, or community-led initiatives.
- **Maximising Resources** – School facilities often remain unused outside of school hours. This toolkit provides insights on how to make the most of these spaces to benefit students and the wider community.
- **Building Effective Partnerships** – Schools don't have to do this alone. Collaborating with local organisations, sports clubs, and community groups can help ensure ongoing success.

LOOKING AHEAD

The impact of opening school facilities goes far beyond access to physical activity—it brings people together, strengthens community pride, and supports long-term social change. Every school has the potential to become a thriving hub of activity and opportunity, helping to shape healthier, happier, and more connected communities.

We hope this toolkit has provided you with the knowledge and confidence to take the next steps in opening your school facilities. By continuing to champion community access, schools can leave a lasting legacy of inclusion, health, and engagement for generations to come. Thank you for your commitment to making a difference!



Thank you



**YOUTH
SPORT
TRUST**



**Active
Partnerships**



More people
More active
More often