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[Department
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Guidance

Responding to requests for wraparound childcare

Updated 27 February 2024

Applies to England

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This guidance will help schools and academy trusts understand how to respond to:

- parents' and carers' requests that the school their child attends considers establishing wraparound or holiday childcare
- childcare providers' requests to use school facilities for wraparound or holiday provision at times when the school is not using them

It will support schools and trusts to respond to requests, regardless of their involvement with the [national wraparound childcare programme](#). You should read this guidance alongside the [wraparound guidance for schools](#).

Overview

Wraparound childcare is childcare that is provided before and after the conventional school day. It can also refer to provision in the school holidays. Many parents rely on the invaluable support from wraparound childcare to enable them to work. This means it needs to be regular and dependable.

Wraparound and holiday childcare can either be:

- on a school's site (run in-house by the school or in partnership with a provider)
- at a nearby school or private, voluntary or independent (PVI) provider

Parents can request that the school their child attends considers establishing wraparound or holiday childcare. This includes prospective parents. Schools and trusts should:

- work with their local authority and any relevant landowner to consider these requests
- respond to them in a transparent way
- take the lead in managing the right to request process
- make the final decision about what action to take

Parents can make a request for children from reception up to the end of key stage 3 (year 9), and up to age 18 for disabled children. Where there is demand, you may

also want to consider wraparound or holiday childcare for the under 5s or for year 10 and above.

A parent's right to request only refers to the school that their child attends.

The right to request only applies to childcare and doesn't extend to extra-curricular activities.

Responsibilities

When handling right to request arrangements, you should be transparent about the process you choose to follow. You should:

- be clear about timescales for dealing with requests
- speak to your local authority (and any relevant landowner where appropriate)
- keep parents and providers informed at each stage
- give reasons for approving or rejecting requests

You should work with your local authority to:

- identify if there is a need for new or expanded wraparound
- understand the wider childcare offers in their area

If you're unable to have wraparound on school site and have a reasonable justification not to, we expect you to communicate the different wraparound childcare options available to parents in your area.

You should consider the views of stakeholders including:

- parents
- governors
- trustees in a trust
- your local authority
- relevant staff and PVI providers (where appropriate)

Governance

Schools within academy trusts should check with the trust to see if they wish to manage requests across the trust or delegate this.

When considering whether to establish wraparound on school site, you should engage with:

- any relevant landowner
- your governing board
- your local authority

If you establish wraparound childcare using the powers of the governing board, the provision is the legal responsibility of the governing board. The trust board can delegate decision-making authority to others, but ultimate responsibility remains with the trust board.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Wraparound settings should be a safe and happy place for children. Parents, carers, and families should feel confident that their child is well looked after and that robust safeguarding arrangements are in place.

Further information on safeguarding, and health and safety is available in the [wraparound childcare guidance for schools](#).

Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

It is important that any wraparound and holiday childcare you consider is suitable for all children in the school. This includes those with SEND.

Schools have a duty to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils under the Equality Act 2010. This means making reasonable adjustments so they can enjoy the other facilities and services such as wraparound childcare that the school provides for pupils.

For support providing wraparound for children with SEND, contact your local

authority.

Role of the local authority

Local authorities have a [duty to make sure there are enough childcare place for parents](#) in their area. They should also:

- support schools and trusts to understand the availability of wraparound childcare in their area
- support schools to communicate the availability of wraparound childcare to families
- help schools and trusts in their area to offer wraparound childcare
- encourage existing providers to expand their provision
- encourage new providers to enter the local childcare market

Local authorities should facilitate and broker partnerships between schools, trusts, providers and childminders. This includes co-ordinating holiday childcare operating across school sites.

To enable you to communicate local provision to parents if you're not providing wraparound on site, your local authority should:

- provide you with a list of local providers
- let you know how to contact their designated wraparound childcare lead

Local authorities should also publish information about childcare in the area on their website. This should include:

- the name, address and contact details of the provider
- the services the provider offers, for example:
 - pre-school
 - after-school
- the type of provision they offer, for example:
 - tuition
 - dance
 - play
- any restrictions on eligibility for using the service

- the days and hours when the service is available
- the cost of using the service if applicable
- whether the provider can care for children with SEND
- a link to the provider's website, if available

Requests from parents

Parents have a right to request that you consider providing wraparound or holiday childcare for children from reception up to the end of key stage 3 (year 9) and up to age 18 for disabled children. They can make the request to the school their child attends.

Tell parents how they can make a request

As part of your regular engagement with parents, you should make parents aware of their right to request wraparound and holiday childcare. You should also clearly set out the timetable and process that parents will need to follow and how you'll respond. Consider signposting parents to their local family information service which provides information on local childcare services.

You should be clear about the information you need from parents to make a decision. This could include:

- the type of childcare requested
- the age range of the children requiring wraparound or holiday childcare
- when provision is most needed

Parents should make their requests in writing. This can be by letter or email or via school-run parent surveys. You should log all requests from parents and keep a record of the date to monitor how up to date this information is.

Monitor the requests you receive

You should monitor the number and type of requests that you receive, including

those from prospective parents. For example, you could do this by having a termly or annual period during the year when parents can make their requests. The timings of this activity should consider when new cohorts of children will be joining the school.

Once you have received a request for wraparound childcare on the school site from a parent, you should engage with the designated local authority wraparound lead and make them aware of the request. The local authority should work with the parent to consider whether there is suitable wraparound provision in the local area.

If the local authority does not have suitable wraparound provision in the area, and you do not have an up-to-date assessment of their parents' wraparound needs within the last year, then you should proceed with a whole school right to request exercise.

Whole school right to request exercise

You should consult parents of all eligible children to test the demand and type of childcare provision requested. This includes parents of prospective children. You may want to enlist the help of a prospective childcare provider to determine demand.

You should consider aligning your right to request process with requests from local authorities. This will help to inform them of the demand and supply of wraparound in the school.

Make a decision

Once you have confirmed parental demand either via the whole school right to request exercise or an up-to-date assessment of parents' wraparound needs within the past year, you should work with your local authority to:

- understand options to increase access to wraparound childcare
- check the existing childcare available in the area
- consider whether providing wraparound childcare is a viable proposition for the school and trust

You should also consult with your governing board and trust board where relevant.

When considering requests, you should speak to relevant parties that hold land for the school's purposes. This may include the local authority, dioceses or charitable site trustees. The freehold land owner would need to agree to the use of the land or buildings by a provider. They may need to enter into any lease or usage agreement with the provider directly. Depending on the nature of this provider's use of school land, you may also need the [involvement or consent of the Secretary of State](#).

Inform parents of the decision

Working with the local authority wraparound lead, you should inform parents about the outcome of the process within an appropriate timeframe, but no longer than a term. This is to allow enough time to survey and consult with the local authority, governing board and landowners if needed.

You should tell parents:

- how many requests you got
- the reasons for your decision
- any next steps you are taking

You should publish the final decision and make parents aware of where it is published.

Where you decide not to proceed with wraparound or holiday childcare on your school site, you should clearly communicate childcare options.

This means working with the local authority to signpost parents to:

- provision that does not require parents to pick up or drop off their children between the school day and wraparound childcare
- their designated wraparound lead
- the local family information service, which will have up-to-date information about the availability of local childcare

Next steps to taking forward parental requests

If you decide to go ahead with the provision of wraparound and holiday childcare,

there are a number of models of delivery. You'll need to decide which is the best route for you and the community you serve.

The [wraparound childcare guidance for schools](#) includes more information on:

- setting up school-run wraparound provision
- working in partnership with a childcare provider
- expanding existing wraparound provision

Requests from providers

Childcare providers can request to use school facilities for wraparound or holiday provision at times when the school is not using them.

You should make sure that any wraparound or holiday childcare providers using your premises:

- consider the needs of children with SEND when planning their activities
- understand their responsibility to have arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- have properly vetted their staff (both paid and volunteer) before they care for children

Set out clear criteria for considering a request

You should work with your local authority to be clear about:

- the criteria you'll use to make a decision
- the information you want providers to include in their requests

Consider including some criteria from the [wraparound childcare guidance for schools](#).

When considering a request, you should factor in your understanding of the demand for wraparound. Speak to your local authority to get a better understanding of the demand levels in your local area.

You may want to look at requests on a case-by-case basis or have a termly or annual window when providers can make requests. To make the process for providers making a request clear, publish your deadlines for considering provision on the school website and include any restrictions on use of the school site.

Childcare providers should make requests to schools in writing. The process should be fair and open for all providers. This includes where there are several providers requesting access to the school site to provide childcare.

Consider the request

When you receive a request from a provider, you should acknowledge receipt and inform the provider of the timescale for processing the request.

Consider:

- meeting the provider to discuss the type of childcare proposed
- how you'll work out the likely demand for the provision across the whole school and the role of the provider in leading this process
- the practicalities for establishing provision, for example:
 - physical space
 - any restrictions on the use of the land
- whether you'll need to engage the Secretary of State, depending on the nature of the provider's use

You may have to manage requests from providers that already run provision on the school site. In these cases, you should:

- assess how far the existing provision meets parental needs
- follow your agreed procedures for:
 - reviewing contracts and contracting services
 - renting facilities

For requests that you accept, you can consider recovering any administrative costs of processing the application from the provider. This can be part of the wider costs for the provision of services or facilities.

For circumstances where it might be reasonable for you to reject requests from providers, see the [wraparound childcare guidance for schools](#).

Inform the provider of your decision

Discuss any plans to provide childcare with your local authority and relevant landowner.

You should inform providers about the outcome of the process within a month.

If you reject a request, you do not need to reconsider requests from the same provider for the same type of provision within 12 months of the last request. This is unless you become aware of a change in demand for wraparound provision in the school (or local area).

Agree a plan for the provision

Where you decide a childcare provider can offer wraparound care, you should agree a plan for how to establish the provision. You can find more information on how to do this in the [wraparound childcare guidance for schools](#).

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