

Transforming lives

Special schools and extended services

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developing people, improving young lives

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The pictures in this publication were taken at Foxwood Foundation School and Technology College, a special school providing education for children and young people aged three to 19 years with special educational needs. The TDA would like to thank the pupils and the staff at the school for their warm welcome, patience and support.

Contents

Listening to needs, shaping services page 4-5

How effective and ongoing consultation can ensure extended services meet the needs of pupils and families and encourage participation

The core offer of extended services page 6-7

The five elements of the ES core offer are designed to help pupils reach their full potential and make the most of school facilities

Extended services in action in special schools page 8-11

How three special schools in different parts of the country are providing access to each element of the ES core offer

The power of partnerships page 12-13

The partnerships that special schools have with other schools, with their local authority and with other service providers are crucial to sustainable provision

Funding for sustainable extended services page 14-15

Special schools are accessing funding from a range of sources and using their partnerships with others to increase their options

Play to your strengths – specialise page 16

How special schools can use specialist status to support the development of extended services and improve outcomes for their pupils

Partnerships are key – a headteacher's view page 17

Chris Humphreys, Headteacher of Foxwood Foundation School and Technology College, on what one special school has learnt about providing ES

New roles, new ways of working page 18

Planning, developing and delivering extended services calls for new approaches to leadership, management and training

Tools and resources page 19

Details of resources and information available from the TDA and its partners

Seizing the opportunity of extended services



"We want our 21st century special schools to have high expectations for what disabled children or children with special educational needs can achieve – and to use the opportunity of extended services to do more for those who face high levels of challenge."

Our vision, set out in the Children's Plan and in the recent schools white paper, *Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future*, is to ensure every child has a great start in life and is supported to fulfil their potential.

Extended services offered by schools and their partners have an important role in making that a reality – and we expect all schools, including special schools, to be providing access to the core offer of extended services by 2010.

A varied menu of activities and childcare can benefit both pupils and parents – pupils have opportunities to enjoy and learn, parents to work or study. Swift and easy access to targeted and specialist services, through effective integrated working between schools, statutory agencies and other providers, can promote inclusion and support pupils to overcome barriers preventing them from fulfilling their potential. And community access to school facilities can benefit everyone who lives near the school.

Parenting support is particularly important in special schools. The parents of disabled children and children with special educational needs (SEN) face many additional challenges and pressures in helping and supporting their children to reach their full potential.

We want our 21st century special schools to have high expectations for what disabled children or children with SEN can achieve – and to use the opportunity of extended services to do more for those who face high levels of challenge, helping them to fulfill their potential, helping them to develop the skills and confidence needed for independence in adult life. They can also provide opportunities for disabled children and those with SEN to play and learn alongside non-disabled children.

In providing access to extended services, special schools have the advantage of long experience of close partnerships with health, social care and specialist services. As the examples in this document show, many special schools have built on this strength to develop innovative and high-quality extended services that are making a real difference. The children at these schools and their families have the same kind extended opportunities as pupils do in mainstream schools – and this is how it should be.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Diana R. Johnson".

Diana Johnson MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools

Listening to needs, shaping services

Effective and ongoing consultation will encourage take-up, create a sense of ownership and ensure that extended services reflect the needs of special school pupils and their families.

Geography, pupil numbers, resources and existing relationships with parents will all have an impact on how special schools gather information. At Larkrise School in Wiltshire, for example, 97 per cent of students travel to and from school by minibus, so there are few opportunities for parents and staff to meet informally.

Gathering information

The school already runs termly coffee mornings but has now decided to apply for local authority funding for a family link worker to help develop its extended services offer. That offer will be shaped by the results of a three-pronged consultation exercise.

Acting Headteacher Phil Cook consulted staff first. "As well as gathering a lot of useful information, we identified some valuable skills we could tap into," he says. "We've got two former play leaders, an ex-member of the behaviour support team and our music therapist has agreed to run some after-school sessions."

Next, a comprehensive questionnaire went out to parents. Then it was the turn of pupils. "We developed a special questionnaire," says Phil Cook, "and held a series of teacher-led discussion groups to give all the children an opportunity to express their views."

Friendly and accessible

In Hull, Family Learning Strategy Leader Jasper Shotts decided to gather and share information through a 'marketplace' event. "We hired the function room of a city-centre pub so it was informal and easy to access," he says. A range of providers gave presentations and distributed information, and a team of young people gathered feedback from parents on the kinds of services they wanted. Parents also watched a film of pupils from the

city's special schools giving their own views on extended services.

"We got a huge amount of feedback," says Jasper Shotts. "Parents' top priority was practical training for themselves and school staff. Pupils told us they wanted drama, art, go-karting – loads of different activities. They're hungry for new experiences." He is now planning a follow-up event and adds: "It's important to keep things moving and keep people engaged."

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The personal touch

At Fiveways and Fairmeads School in Somerset, Parent Support Adviser (PSA) Sharon White has launched a range of initiatives to get parents more involved with the school. When asked, more than 60 per cent said they would welcome more contact, both with the school and with other parents.

Sharon White attends all school events and sets up a refreshment

area at parents evenings, where people can sit and chat in a relaxed atmosphere. She keeps in touch with parents by phone and letter, including during the school holidays. "Parents of children with special needs can feel very isolated," she says. "Some pupils travel 30 miles to get here, so their parents really value the opportunity to speak to someone who understands their situation." Find more information on PSAs at www.tda.gov.uk/psa

Tailoring services

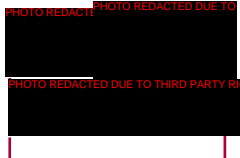
Often, consultation leads directly to the development of new services. When parents at the Parks School in Rutland said they wanted help to cope with their children at home and with their own emotional needs, the school set up a home support scheme and specialist counselling service.

Soon, demand for the counsellor outstripped supply. Two parents came forward and suggested that they train to become family counsellors in their own right. "We secured external funding for them to train part time and they've already started mentoring other families," says Headteacher Pia Kerridge.

The school's pupils have also had their say. "Pupils told us they wanted more creative after-school activities," says Pia Kerridge, "so we now run weekly arts workshops in partnership with a local specialist arts college." Specialist workers support children with very complex needs and year 10 students from the college act as buddies.

Meanwhile, at Preston's Pear Tree School, feedback is helping the school to target resources. "When we consulted parents about childcare, we found that the demand was for holiday provision," says Headteacher Lesley Koller. "We now have an extremely popular play scheme where children can learn and play alongside their mainstream peers. Where parents need after-school care as well, we signpost to existing local clubs. Consultation helped us focus on priority areas and it makes sure everyone gets the support they need."

A framework for robust consultation

 Kirkleatham Hall Special School in Redcar was involved in piloting the School Improvement Planning Framework, which was developed by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and the National College for the Leadership of Schools and Children's Services in partnership with more than 200 schools. "We wanted to make sure we were consulting both widely and effectively," says Headteacher Gill Naylor.

Kirkleatham found the What's Working? tool a simple and effective way of gathering feedback. Student council representatives took responsibility for consulting pupils, carrying out a separate exercise in each classroom so that all pupils could have their say.

The exercise has also proved a great way of reaching out to parents. The school used the exercise at parents evenings attended by around 80 per cent of our parents and got feedback from nearly all of them – a typical questionnaire would yield 10 to 20 completed forms. "We're gathering far more evidence than before and getting parents more involved," says Gill Naylor.

A wider evidence base gives the school a clearer picture of where improvements can be made and where resources should be focused. It is also a chance to celebrate success. "The evidence we've gathered shows that there are an awful lot of things we're getting right," says Gill Naylor.

Find out more about the framework at www.tda.gov.uk/schoolimprovement

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The core offer of extended services

A **varied menu of activities** (including study support and play) and **childcare**. In primary and special schools, this means access to a varied menu of activities, combined with childcare, provided from 8am to 6pm, five days a week, 48 weeks a year, in response to demand. In secondary schools, this means access to a varied menu of activities and a safe place to socialise and complete homework, provided from 8am to 6pm during term time and more flexibly during the holidays.

Swift and easy access (SEA) to targeted and specialist services. All schools, working closely with other statutory services and the voluntary and community sector, should focus on the early identification of – and the provision of support for – children and young people who have additional needs or who are at risk of poor outcomes.

Parenting support. Supporting parents means providing access to structured, evidence-based parenting programmes, informal opportunities for parents to engage with the school and each other, family learning sessions and information.

Community access. Where a school has facilities suitable for use by the wider community (eg playing fields, sports facilities, IT facilities, halls), it should look to open these up to meet wider community needs in response to local demand.



Removing barriers to learning

Schools provide a focal point not only for the children and young people they teach but also for their families and the wider community. In recognition of the key role they play in raising standards and aspirations, the Government has made a commitment that all schools will be providing access to a core offer of extended services by 2010. Extended services are among the defining characteristics of a 21st century school.

Extended services will help all pupils to realise their potential by tackling barriers to learning. They are based on the principle that what goes on outside the classroom has a major influence on children and young people and their capacity to learn. Schools that are already delivering extended services are seeing a positive impact on pupils, parents, the wider community and the school itself.

Among pupils, a more positive attitude to learning and better physical and emotional health are leading to improved attendance and behaviour and, eventually, to higher

attainment. Parents are learning how to play an active role in their children's education and raising their own aspirations through learning and training. Communities are engaging with their schools and benefiting from access to a wide range of facilities and support.

For schools themselves, extended services are creating an opportunity not only to deliver more effective teaching and learning but to position themselves at the heart of their communities in line with the vision for 21st century schools set out in the recent white paper, *Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future: Building a 21st Century Schools System* (June 2009), which builds on the aims of the Children's Plan.

21st century special schools

According to the white paper: "21st century special schools should have high expectations for what their pupils can achieve, promote the skills and confidence needed for independence in adult life, provide opportunities for disabled and non-disabled children to play and learn together and share their expertise – whether in leadership, SEN or the curriculum – with other schools."

All schools are expected to have a sharper focus on improving outcomes for children, in particular those with disabilities and SEN.

Ofsted research

"The extended schools visited on this survey grasped the opportunities [...] to challenge disadvantage and overcome barriers to learning. They identified children and young people who might otherwise fail; they enabled pupils to stay at school, and achieve national expectations or beyond. [...] It was in transforming the life chances of individual pupils that these extended schools were at their most successful and cost-effective."

Good Practice in Extended Schools: a short survey to examine effective practice in a small sample of the most successful full core service extended schools in the most disadvantaged circumstances, Ofsted 2009 (a survey of 23 extended schools).

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Extended services in action in special schools

While all schools will be expected to deliver the five elements of the extended services core offer by 2010, within that framework there is scope for tailoring services to reflect the needs of pupils and their families and to fit the school's own unique context. Here we look at how three special schools – Ellen Tinkham School, Pear Tree School and Penn Hall School – are giving pupils, their families and the wider community access to the core offer of extended services

"Helping them spread their wings and develop their independence is so important. It's about preparing them for the future."

Alun Stoll, Headteacher,
Penn Hall School

"The enrichment of the curriculum is excellent. [...] There is a very good range of activities at lunchtime and after school [...] and this contributes very well to pupils' overall enjoyment."

Ofsted inspection report,
Penn Hall School, March 2007

About the schools

Ellen Tinkham Community Special School in Exeter has 118 pupils aged three to 19 with severe learning disabilities. The school covers a catchment area of around 40 miles.

Pear Tree Specialist School and Children's Centre in Preston caters for 68 pupils aged two to 19 with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties.

Penn Hall School in Wolverhampton has 80 pupils aged three to 19 with physical and sensory disabilities.



Childcare

The out-of-hours club at **Ellen Tinkham** provides a safe place for children and offers learning opportunities and respite for parents. The sessions run until 6.30pm and the children help to prepare their own evening meal. A full-day session is open to pupils and their siblings on one Saturday a month.

Feedback from parents at **Pear Tree** pointed to a clear need for holiday provision, rather than pre- or after-school care, so the school now runs a popular holiday scheme in partnership with its cluster. Pupils are charged a daily flat fee, with mainstream pupils effectively 'subsidising' the extra resource needed to care for those with special needs. The school reports that real friendships are forming between pupils with very different levels of need.

Penn Hall's rolling residential programme gives six pupils each week the chance to stay in the school's hostel-style accommodation. This popular programme is designed to provide enrichment opportunities for pupils and to give parents a regular, scheduled respite period. The Penn Pals club also provides after-school care until 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.

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Varied menu of activities

Pupils at **Ellen Tinkham** help out on the school allotment, enjoy regular visits from local arts groups and take part in work experience placements. The school's learning community coordinator is now working to identify cluster-wide extra-curricular opportunities in the hope of getting pupils to play and learn alongside their mainstream counterparts.

At **Pear Tree**, the warm-water pool is a focal point for after-school and holiday activities, with children swimming in it every day. A new aquatic learning coordinator is exploring ways of using the pool to support learning and looking at the feasibility of expanding the existing weekly Water Babies session into a full roster of after-school clubs.

Each week, six **Penn Hall** pupils stay over in the school's residential unit. It gives them a chance to explore their independence in a safe, secure environment and to take part in the school's roster of extra-curricular activities. The weekly menu includes an art-and-craft club, wheelchair football, a computer club and a music club. Friday's green club puts the spotlight on environmental issues.

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Swift and easy access

With a team of specialists – including speech therapists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists – on site, **Ellen Tinkham** is well placed to offer swift and easy access to targeted and specialist services. The school maintains strong links with other services, including the local wheelchair clinic and the orthotics clinic, and involves the multi-agency team in its annual pupil reviews. This means specialist services form an integral part of personalised programmes from the outset.

As both a special school and a children's centre, **Pear Tree** can meet the needs of babies, children and teenagers with a wide range of abilities. Baby massage, Tummy Time, Water Babies and Fit and Fun sessions offer opportunities to identify any problems – including learning difficulties – early on and then design appropriate interventions that draw on the centre's links with a wide range of health and other services.

Penn Hall aims to be a 'one-stop shop' for pupils and their families. As well as providing a base for healthcare professionals, physiotherapists and language therapists, the school employs a full-time access and development manager to link up services and make them as accessible as possible.

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Parenting support

New parents at **Ellen Tinkham** are invited to 'buddy up' with existing parents so they get to know the school and how it works. Parents are also being trained as facilitators so they can play a full part in the annual person-centred reviews carried out for each pupil, boosting engagement with the school and equipping parents to support their children's learning.

Pear Tree offers a range of learning opportunities for parents, including a NVQ in childcare. Four parents, who had not worked since having children, have now finished the course and have gone on to find work that they can combine with their childcare commitments.

At its weekly School for Parents sessions, **Penn Hall** provides targeted provision to help parents gain the practical skills they need to support their children, for example, by improving their mobility or boosting their language skills. The sessions give parents a chance to meet each other and share their experiences and ensure that children are receiving the same standard of care and support at school and at home.

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Community access

Ellen Tinkham's well established lettings policy opens up school facilities to members of the community and specialist services, such as paediatric, visual and auditory clinics, and generates valuable income for the school. The school's purpose-built conference room and hall are available for seminars and training sessions and outreach work with other local schools is helping to build up a local network of contacts.

As a children's centre, **Pear Tree** is perfectly placed to provide a hub for the local community. People visit the site regularly to access health and social services or to participate in a wide range of learning and training opportunities. The school regularly runs open days, giving local people an opportunity to look around the site and find out more about the services on offer.

The hydro pool at **Penn Hall** is popular with local physiotherapists and their clients, care homes and charities such as Mencap, which use it at lunchtimes, in the evenings and during the summer holidays. The school's creative woodland activity trail features sculptures, a zipwire and boardwalk and is open to pupils from all local schools.

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“The more we can share the way we work by training parents and staff alongside each other, the more consistent and less anxious our young people become. Behaviour improves across the board.”

Carolyn Purslow, Deputy Headteacher, Ellen Tinkham Community Special School

“The school's excellent links with the community provide additional activities [...], part-time attendance at mainstream schools and a variety of work experience placements for older students. [...] A charity connected to the school organises a wide range of after-school, weekend and holiday activities, which are well attended.”

Ofsted inspection report, Ellen Tinkham Community Special School, October 2007

“We want this school to be the social anchor of the community. We want people to recognise that the children here at Pear Tree have a real positive contribution to make.”

Lesley Koller, Headteacher, Pear Tree School

“Parents feel welcomed by the school as partners in their child's education. One parent commented, ‘When our child joined Pear Tree, the whole family joined the school.’ [...] There is a wide range of activities to take pupils out of the classroom, showing them that new things can be learned in many different situations. This adds substantially to the pupils' social skills, their self-confidence and their interest in learning.”

Ofsted inspection report, Pear Tree School, October 2008

The power of partnerships

Local authorities are using their expertise, resources and networks of contacts to support special schools in planning, developing and delivering extended services.

Local authorities are in a unique position to pull together all the strands that will enable special schools to deliver the core offer. "We're in a good position to take an overview," says Anna Moore, Extended Schools Development Manager at Kent County Council. "That means we can make connections that individual schools, both mainstream and special, would otherwise struggle with."

Sharing knowledge

Anna Moore cites the example of Kent's community youth tutors, two of whom are currently working in the county's special schools. The posts are mainly funded by the youth service and tutors spend around 40 per cent of their time in school. "As well as providing valuable youth work interventions during the school day, the idea is that they also work with pupils to find out what they want to do out of school," says Anna Moore. "Then they go out to individual villages and liaise with local youth workers and support young people to get involved in extra-curricular activities near their homes. Often, pupils live a long way from their special school so it's a service that would be very difficult for schools to replicate."

Similarly, in Exeter, the extended services coordinator (whose role is paid for through the extended

services budget) is improving communication within the cluster that includes Ellen Tinkham Community Special School. "He's put together a learning community newsletter with information about a whole range of activities, ranging from community choirs to French classes to support for parents," says Deputy Headteacher Carolyn Purslow. "We're currently mapping where all our pupils live, so the newsletter is invaluable. It's really going to help us put pupils and families, who might otherwise feel quite isolated, in touch with the services around them."

Access to funding

Often, local authorities can help special schools tap into additional sources of funding for extended services. In Northumberland, schools – including special schools – are directly involved in deciding how to spend Disabled Children's Access

to Childcare (DCATCH) funding, which is provided by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to give families with a disabled child targeted help. "DCATCH workers sit on extended services partnership committees," explains Extended Services Adviser Carol Leckie. "By devolving decision making down to cluster level, special schools have an opportunity to tell us what they need and DCATCH funding can be allocated to support the childcare and parenting support elements of the core offer."

Developing expertise

Raising standards across a local authority area benefits everyone, including pupils with special needs and their families. In Kent, Anna Moore is working to put in place training that will ensure that everyone working in the county's childcare settings reaches the standards set out in All of Us – the

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Framework for Quality Inclusion. The framework, developed by the DCSF's Playwork Inclusion Project, is designed to ensure that early years, play and childcare settings adopt an inclusive approach to children and young people with special needs.

"We want to be sure that every setting makes disabled children and their families feel welcome. Parents should feel happy and confident that staff can cope with their children's needs."

Anna Moore, Extended Schools Development Manager,
Kent County Council

See page 18 for information on how young people in Kent are developing their own expertise in working with their special needs counterparts through partnership with the voluntary sector.

Cluster power

As well as working collaboratively with local authorities, special schools are forming strong and mutually beneficial relationships with other schools, often as part of cluster arrangements. In Northumberland, three extended services coordinators (ESCOs) are helping make sense of a complex network of relationships and ensuring that special schools are properly represented.

"Our special schools will often draw their pupils from several different clusters," says Carol Leckie. "To give pupils access to everything that's going on – and, crucially – to enable them to get involved in activities close to their homes, you need someone to pull it altogether. That's

where our ESCOs come in. Through their work at school level, they can develop an in-depth understanding of individual pupils' needs. And at cluster level, they can make sure those needs are properly reflected in the planning and development of services."

Schools are also forging links with each other directly. Larkrise School in Wiltshire shares a site with a mainstream school, Paxcroft Primary, and uses the school field for PE activities whenever possible. Now the schools' senior management teams have made a commitment to liaise on the development of extended services. A 'link club' will provide opportunities for two-way play sessions, while improved timetabling will allow better access to the school field for Larkrise pupils. In return, Larkrise will offer access to specialist facilities, including its climbing wall and hydrotherapy pools. Plans are under way to train Paxcroft staff so they can make use of Larkrise's fleet of minibuses.

For Lesley Koller of Pear Tree School in Preston, cluster working is also creating opportunities for her own pupils to benefit from contact with their counterparts. The school has set up a popular holiday play scheme along with its cluster partners (see page 8 for more detail). "Practically, the presence of the mainstream children enables us to provide the intensive resources our own children need," Lesley Koller explains, "but the benefits are huge for everyone involved. We see children working out ways to communicate with each other and real friendships are forming." In term time, Pear Tree children are signposted to after-school clubs run by other cluster schools.

A unique challenge

With pupils often travelling 10s of miles to school each day, special schools face some unique challenges in providing access to extended services, particularly after-school activities. At Penn Hall, Headteacher Alun Stoll acknowledges that transport can be a problem. "Mainly, we rely on parents for their support," he admits. "It's an area for us to develop." In the mean time, pupils are regularly invited to stay in the school's residential unit, where they can take part in as many activities as they like while their parents have a week's respite.

Elsewhere, practical solutions are springing up. In Hull, two special schools have agreed to share gym facilities, with staff from one school agreeing to drive a minibus of pupils to the other site. At Hexham Priory School in Northumberland, Extended Services Coordinator Annie Sanders is testing the feasibility of training pupils to use public transport so that they can access a mainstream after-school club three miles away.

Most schools accept the need for a pragmatic approach. "In our situation, there's no point providing after-school provision because pupils and parents can't access it," says Pear Tree's Lesley Koller. "That's why we focus on our holiday activities." At Larkrise, an extended lunch break means pupils can get involved in activities during the school day. "It's a simple, no-cost way of alleviating the transport problem while making sure our pupils aren't missing out," says Acting Headteacher Phil Cook.

Funding for sustainable extended services

Sustainable extended services mean long-term benefits. As well as tapping into sources of Government and other funding, schools should explore opportunities for working together and sharing resources with each other.

Between 2008 and 2011, the Government is investing £1.3 bn in the extended services programme. Funding is being routed via local authorities through the Standards Fund and the

Area-Based Grant and being made available directly to schools through the School Standards Grant and the Dedicated schools Grant. Schools are free to choose how to use the money to support their own extended services priorities.

The extended services disadvantage subsidy

The extended services disadvantage subsidy is designed to help remove the financial barriers to participation in extended services. The subsidy is currently being piloted and will be available to all school clusters through the Standards Fund from April 2010. The subsidy must be spent directly on helping pupils and not, for example, on administration or consultation.

Other sources of funding

Through Aiming High for Disabled Children, the Government is providing information and funding to support professionals, managers and service commissioners in a number of key areas, including providing short breaks, encouraging parent participation, supporting children through transition and improving palliative care.

Aiming High also focuses on childcare and a separate tranche of funding is being provided for this high-priority area. DCATCH is supporting projects around the country, including new centres of excellence for disabled children and specialist training for childminders.

Schools are also accessing funding from a range of other sources, including neighbourhood renewal, charities, the National Lottery and private sponsors, for example to support access to breakfast clubs and study support sessions. Such funding is often time bound.

Sustainability

Few schools, if any, can provide access to the full extended services core offer without working closely with other schools. By pooling their resources, schools can broaden their offer and increase the chance of services being delivered on a long-term basis. Costs can be shared with other schools and agencies. Schools may also choose to charge a fee, for example, for childcare (such charges are eligible for the childcare element of the working tax credit) or for community access to a gym or swimming pool.

Find out more

Funding for extended services:
www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/extendedschools

The extended services disadvantage subsidy: www.tda.gov.uk/subsidy

Aiming High for Disabled Children:
www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/healthandwellbeing/ahdc

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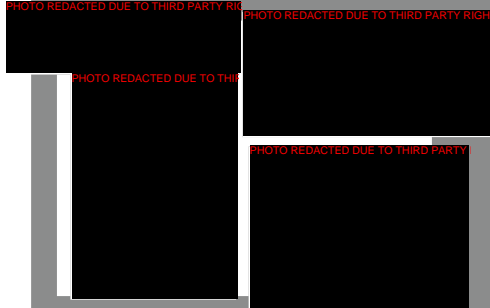
"This is a fantastic scheme for the students to keep them occupied for part of the long holiday. Having transport to pick up and drop off is very useful."

"Thank you for all the hard work the staff put into the scheme – it is the highlight of her year."

"He had a fantastic time and the holiday scheme allows him to feel confident and have fun without any worries. Thanks to all the staff who work hard to make the scheme so enjoyable and so much fun."

Parents, Penn Hall School

The school cluster development tool



The TDA's school cluster development tool is designed to encourage more effective partnership working and resource sharing by helping clusters of schools gain a full and accurate picture of what is needed to ensure the sustainability of extended services.

Carol Leckie, Extended Services Adviser at Northumberland County Council says: "This is an excellent resource that can be used at many different levels. Our cluster managers used it with headteachers at one-to-one meetings and in cluster meetings. It can also be used with partner agencies and by the local authority to help centrally based staff identify areas of concern or develop action plans. What is also important is that it makes those involved think about sustainability being more than just a funding issue."

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Play to your strengths – specialise

Over the past 10 years, nearly 260 special schools have become specialist schools, boosting levels of attainment and raising standards of teaching and learning across the curriculum.

Any maintained or non-maintained special school with pupils at Key Stage 3 and above can apply to the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) for specialist status. As well as the 11 curricular specialisms also available to mainstream schools, special schools can specialise in four specific SEN areas: communication and interaction; cognition and learning; behavioural, emotional and social difficulties; and physical and/or sensory impairment.

Raising standards

By strengthening teaching and learning in one area, specialising can help special schools boost attainment and achievement across the whole curriculum. Specialising also creates opportunities for special schools to strengthen links with partners, including other schools, colleges and employers.

Specialist schools need to draw up a three-year development plan and raise at least £20,000 in private sector sponsorship. The SSAT provides a one-off grant of £100,000 and then an annual grant of at least £60,000 for specialist special schools.

Supporting the extended services offer

The three-year plan should include details of how the school plans to develop its specialism and work in partnership both with other schools and the wider community, linking its specialist status to its extended services offer. New Bridge School in Oldham, which achieved Arts College status in 2006, has used its capital grant to build an art gallery and upgrade its sound and lighting equipment. The school now attracts more than 900 members of the community each week. "We're able to offer a wide range of activities," says Headteacher Graham Quinn, "and, at the same time, we're challenging people's preconceptions about disability."

The Youth Sport Trust: supporting special schools

Sport is the most popular specialism for special schools and the Youth Sport Trust (YST) is currently working with 26 special school sports colleges and 28 special schools with a specialism in physical and sensory impairment. The Trust also provides a range of support for all schools.

School Sport Partnerships

Most special schools, whether or not they specialise, belong to one of England's 450 School Sport Partnerships. Of these, some 200 special schools are being funded to take on a more strategic role, either managing a 'family' of special schools or promoting inclusion across the partnership. These include Westcroft School and

Sports College in Wolverhampton, which works to support the delivery of two hours of PE and sport per week to pupils in 31 local mainstream, special and primary schools, and Shepherd School and Sports College in Nottingham, which employs a full-time strategic coordinator to ensure that disabled and SEN pupils can access out-of-hours learning.

Targeted resources

YST has developed a number of resources for pupils with SEN and/or a disability. The TOP Sportsability activity pack features nine inclusive games and activities, including the paralympic sports of boccia and goalball, while TOP Sportsability festivals aim to give young disabled people and pupils with SEN access to leadership opportunities as well as sports activities. The Trust is now supporting nine disability leadership academies to provide opportunities and support for those young disabled people who want to become leaders, coaches and officials.

Find out more

For more information about applying for specialist status, contact the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust Designation and Redesignation Team on designation@ssatrust.org.uk or 020 7802 2377.

For more information about the Youth Sport Trust, go to www.youthsporttrust.org or e-mail osu-requests@youthsporttrust.org

Partnerships are key – a headteacher's view

**Chris
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Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Service's strategy for ES has been to develop provision through school clusters. The cluster that Foxwood is part of consists of five primary schools, one secondary school and Foxwood as the local area special school. Across the county there are clusters that build on the existing 'family' of schools in each geographical area. Foxwood has played a central role in developing ES across the cluster and we employ the ES coordinator for the cluster.

A key to the success of the cluster has been the expertise of the coordinator who was appointed from a project management background in industry. The skill set and experience of managing complex systems has proven essential in delivering the ES core offer. Coordinating a cluster for ES is not something you can 'bolt on' to the roles and responsibilities of existing school staff because their key functions are very different. ES is a very different piece of work that requires a specific set of skills and attributes. This is one of the important lessons we have learnt – talent management and clear staffing structures make it work. Our partnerships with other schools

are essential in delivering extended services – we can share each other's facilities and ensure that the provision across the cluster is as broad and varied as possible, responsive to need and of high quality. We are developing the parenting support element of our ES offer in light of our most recent consultation and feedback. However, we are not going to attempt to deliver this in isolation, we are going to be smart about signposting to other schools, other agencies and other local authority service providers.

Where possible, we try to make connections between the curriculum and ES provision. We are also developing provision linked to our specialism in technology and applied learning – to increase student participation in targeted activities. These links also give continuity to the experiences of our young people. This has a positive effect on student attendance and engagement. Careful consideration about these issues helps increase parents' confidence in the relevance and appropriateness of the provision and this, again, impacts positively on attendance and engagement.

Another learning point has been in acknowledging the need to keep checking with students and their families that the range of ES provision is what the community needs. We proactively seek out their views at community events because the dynamics of our 'community' are constantly changing. What is needed one year (or term) may not be what is needed the next. Ongoing consultation is crucial, particularly for special schools

where the needs of individuals can be so diverse. We have established a steering group for the cluster's ES provision that includes parents and representatives of all our local partners. We have also found the School Improvement Planning Framework has been a powerful tool to identify the needs of our stakeholders.

There's no getting away from the fact that there are challenges, the most obvious and recurrent one being transport. We have to make any after-school provision work for parents – so our activities start straight after school and run through to 6pm. Funding is a continual challenge, because the support requirements for our young people – essential to enable safe participation – are many times more expensive than those for students in mainstream schools.

"We believe that all the effort is worth it. ES opportunities can make a real difference to the lives of young people – they access a broad range of activities alongside their community peers and, as a result, feel more confident and self-assured."

We have begun tracking the impact of ES on student progress and attainment because we are already beginning to see a correlation between participation and the progress that our young people make.

Our top tip? Be clever with what's already out there – and don't try to do it all yourself.

New roles, new ways of working

Planning, developing and implementing extended services calls for a flexible approach to leadership, management and resources.

Like many special schools, Penn Hall School in Wolverhampton has found that extended services are creating opportunities to bring new expertise into the school workforce and for existing staff to develop their careers.

For example, Headteacher Alun Stoll has rejigged the timetable for one of his teaching assistants, Cora Boffey, so that she can spend a day each week running the popular School for Parents (see page 10). "It's a great opportunity for me," she says. "I'm developing new skills at the same time as working on something I feel really passionate about." Another of the school's teaching assistants has started working alongside Penn Hall's speech and language therapist.

Penn Hall has also taken on a full-time access and development manager. "He might look at how we can break down the barriers between wheelchair services and speech and language, so that a child who's getting a new chair gets any devices they need to support their speech at the same time," explains Alun Stoll. "Focusing on access can make a big difference to a child's performance. We've got one boy who used to work the computer keyboard with his nose. Now he's got a device that enables him to move the cursor with his eyes and the standard of his work has just leapt up."

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Innovative solutions

Ellen Tinkham School in Exeter has chosen to strengthen its annual review process – which creates an in-depth action plan for each pupil, covering activities inside and outside the classroom – by training parents as facilitators. "It gets parents involved and gives them a real insight into how their child is doing," says Deputy Headteacher Carolyn Purslow. "It also emphasises the importance of creating a close partnership between school and home, with teachers and parents taking a consistent approach, reinforcing and supporting each other."

Parents are also playing a high-profile role at the Parks Special School in Rutland. Following a consultation that identified clear priority areas (see page 5), two

parents are training as family counsellors and are already providing support for other families.

Partnership working

In Kent, young volunteers are helping to expand and improve the range of extra-curricular activities on offer to children from special schools. Voluntary Action West Kent (VAWK) trains young people from mainstream schools to run after-school clubs, some for mixed groups of children and others specifically for those with special needs.

"Young volunteers come to us because they want to learn and to give something back to the community," says Peter Nicholls of VAWK. "The idea is that they take the lead, working with the children

who come along to the sessions to find out what they want to do, and then make it happen. When they work with children with special needs, you can see their attitudes changing and their preconceptions melting away. And for children with disabilities, it's an opportunity just to be normal and do the things that other children do. I think the two groups gain a huge amount from spending time together in a supportive environment."

New structures

At Pear Tree School in Preston, the drive to offer extended services has led to a fundamental reappraisal of the way the school works. By setting up a separate company, the Pear Tree Holiday Club (Kirkham) Ltd, the school has been able to tap into new sources of funding and take a flexible approach to staffing its holiday provision. "During term time, our teaching assistants work in the school under conventional contracts," says Headteacher Lesley Koller. "During the holidays, they're employed by the Holiday Club on a casual basis. It keeps us 'light on our feet' and means we can adapt staffing levels in line with need, keeping costs down as much as possible."

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Tools and resources

The School Improvement Planning Framework. Developed by the TDA and the National College for the Leadership of Schools and Children's services, the framework is a suite of tools and techniques designed to help schools take their planning, strategic thinking and implementation to the next level. www.tda.gov.uk/schoolimprovement

Extended services: a toolkit for governors. This toolkit is designed to help governors support their schools in developing effective extended services that reflect the needs of pupils and the wider community, and have a real impact on pupil outcomes. www.tda.gov.uk/extendedservicesforgovernors

Extended services sustainability – a school cluster development tool. The school cluster development tool is designed to help cluster managers build a complete picture of the conditions for ES sustainability across the cluster and use this as an important input into the cluster development plan and local authority strategic plans. www.tda.gov.uk/sustainability

Engaging schools in sustainable Every Child Matters and extended services. Developing and sustaining high-quality extended services and making sure that they are focused on pupil outcomes are ongoing challenges for all schools. The TDA and the National College have developed a practical resource pack designed to help school leaders and local authorities overcome the barriers that some schools experience. www.tda.gov.uk/about/publicationslisting/tda0672

Partners providing support

Specialist Schools and Academies Trust. For information about specialist status, contact the SSAT Designation and Redesignation Team on designation@ssatrust.org.uk or 020 7802 2377.

Youth Sport Trust. www.youthsporttrust.org or e-mail osu-requests@youthsporttrust.org

4Children. 4Children offers a range of resources to support the delivering of ES, including a survey of nine special schools entitled: Special Schools in the East Midlands Delivering the Full Core Offer of Extended Services: an examination of best practice. www.4children.org.uk

ContinYou. ContinYou's Extended and Integrated Service (E&IS) Team can offer schools and LAs: focused support with extended services development; advice and support with school remodelling; planning and self-evaluation around extended services. www.continyou.org.uk

Children's Workforce Development Council. The CWDC has developed a range of resources to support integrated working. www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/integrated-working

Together for Disabled Children TfC is the DCSF's national delivery partner for the short breaks and parent participation strands of Aiming High for Disabled Children. Useful resources include answers to frequently asked questions, case studies and toolkits. www.togetherfdc.org

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