



Department
for Education

Delivering school- age childcare provision

**Non-statutory guidance for schools and
academy trusts**

May 2026

Contents

Contents	2
Purpose of this guidance	3
Who is this guidance is for	3
Part one: Government vision and how we expect schools to be part of delivering school-age childcare	4
DfE Vision	4
Expectations for schools and statutory context	4
Setting up and offering wraparound childcare	5
Free breakfast clubs	6
Supporting holiday childcare	6
Part two: Practical advice on delivering school-age childcare	8
Work with local authorities	8
Understanding parent's childcare needs and promoting provision	9
Choosing delivery models	9
Consider partnering with private, voluntary or independent (PVI) providers	11
Offsite provision & signposting	11
When to register with Ofsted	12
Creating inclusive provision	13
Promote and support government childcare offers	14
Staffing	15
Ratios	16
Qualifications and training	16
Using school space for childcare	17
Health and Safety and Safeguarding	19
Food and nutrition standards	20
Providing good quality school-age childcare	21
Governance	21

Purpose of this guidance

This non-statutory guidance sets out the role of schools and trusts in supporting parents to access school-age childcare (SAC) and contributing to an accessible, sustainable and inclusive childcare offer for families, during term time and during school holidays. This includes building on the successes of the National Wraparound Childcare programme, including by supporting the sustainability of the places created by it, and the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, which has expanded holiday programmes in recent years, as well engaging with the roll out of the National Free Breakfast Clubs (FBCs) programme.

Part one of this guidance outlines the Government's vision for SAC and how schools are expected to play their part. Part two provides practical advice on how schools can deliver or facilitate provision, working alongside their local authority, who holds the statutory duty for ensuring sufficient childcare in the area.

Who is this guidance is for

This guidance is primarily for school leaders, academy trusts and governing bodies. It may also be of interest to private, voluntary or independent (PVI) childcare providers, childminders, early years childcare providers and parents. DfE has published [separate SAC guidance for local authorities](#).

Part one: Government vision and how we expect schools to be part of delivering school-age childcare

DfE Vision

The need for childcare does not stop when children reach school age. Many families continue to rely on childcare before and after school and during the school holidays. Schools already play a vital role in meeting this need and we recognise the substantial contribution they make through delivering wraparound childcare, either directly or in partnership with local providers. This includes including those schools which created new places through the National Wraparound Childcare programme, which ran from September 2024 to March 2026.

As we move into the next phase, we want to build on the successes of the National Wraparound Childcare programme, working in collaboration with local authorities, schools, and providers to create a SAC system that supports families across term time and holidays.

To support this vision, we are providing local authorities with additional funding in financial year 2026 to 2027, and have been clear that we expect them to use this money to work closely with schools and local childcare providers to strengthen delivery of programmes such as the [HAF programme](#) and the national rollout of the [FBCs programme](#). Taken together, and with the support of schools and providers, these programmes underpin a system that supports families all year-round and provides them with opportunities for work and study.

We want schools to continue to work with the DfE, local authorities and local providers to maintain progress. This means they should continue to deliver wraparound childcare during term time, and consider how they can support the creation of additional childcare where it is needed, particularly during the school holidays. Schools are uniquely placed to do this, whether by delivering provision, working with the HAF programme, or making their premises available to local providers.

Many schools are already successfully supporting family engagement, strengthening recruitment, and contributing to improved attendance and pupil outcomes.

This vision places schools at the heart of a coordinated, sustainable childcare system to ensure families can access the right childcare at the right time and continue to give children the best start in life.

Expectations for schools and statutory context

We expect all schools with primary-age pupils schools to:

- make wraparound childcare available from 8am-6pm, or equivalent hours, and to help sustain the childcare places already created through the National Wraparound Childcare Programme
- make wraparound childcare available on, or in the vicinity of, the school site
- consider how they can build a broader childcare offer for their community, including during school holidays, including incorporating DfE programmes such as HAF and FBCs.

Every school with primary-aged pupils will be expected to deliver a FBC, in line with the [FBCs guidance](#). We recognise that schools will be at different points on this journey – whether as part of early adopter cohorts or joining later - but all schools will ultimately be expected to establish and integrate a FBC into their wider childcare offer. Mapping their overall SAC offer, including how the programme could work alongside any existing childcare, will support schools to embed the FBC at the right time for them.

Local authorities are required, by section 6 of [the Childcare Act 2006](#), to ensure there are enough childcare places within their locality for working parents, or for parents who are studying or training for employment, of children aged 0 to 14 (or up to 18 for disabled children). However, schools and trusts play a vital role in helping to achieve childcare sufficiency by:

- offering wraparound and holiday provision, or signposting families to suitable alternatives
- working collaboratively with their local authority and PVI providers
- engaging in delivery of government-funded programmes such as FBCs and the HAF programme
- promoting government childcare subsidies to families, to help reduce costs and improve affordability

Schools must ensure they understand and comply with relevant Ofsted registration and inspection requirements that apply to schools and any PVI providers involved, including where exemptions may apply. See the When to register with Ofsted section.

Setting up and offering wraparound childcare

As trusted settings at the heart of their communities, schools are often the first point of contact for parents seeking before and after school support. Wraparound childcare should be designed around the structure of the school day and responsive to the needs and circumstances of each school.

Where possible, schools with primary-aged pupils are expected to offer formal wraparound childcare, either delivered directly by the school or by a PVI provider, including childminders. If onsite delivery is not feasible - for example, due to lack of suitable space - schools must work with their local authority to ensure parents are signposted to appropriate alternatives in the vicinity of the school.

Local authorities should support schools to understand the childcare available locally, explore different delivery models, and develop sustainable approaches. This may include brokering partnerships with PVI providers, enabling hub or cluster arrangements between schools, and helping schools to identify suitable spaces for before and afterschool childcare. Mixed delivery models, such as school-run morning sessions combined with PVI-run after school provision, can help meet parents' needs - particularly where extended opening hours are required.

Free breakfast clubs

This government is committed to ensuring that state schools, with primary-aged children, offer FBCs to all pupils. 750 early adopter schools commenced delivery in April 2025 followed by the commencement of national roll out in April 2026. The DfE is rolling out the programme in cohorts to ensure schools can be supported as they commence the delivery of FBCs and so that early learning can support future cohorts. Schools that already offer FBCs report improvements in behaviour, attendance, and academic attainment. FBCs should build on existing school provision and contribute to the full wraparound childcare offer.

All schools, including those not currently delivering the programme but who will be involved in future cohorts, should familiarise themselves with the [FBCs guidance](#), including [DfE's support offer](#).

Supporting holiday childcare

Schools are well positioned to support families in accessing quality holiday provision and should work with their local authority to understand what holiday childcare is available locally and ensure families receive clear information. Some schools choose to deliver holiday clubs themselves, and others will work with PVI providers, childminders, or community organisations to ensure families have access to suitable provision during school holidays.

Schools can also play an important role in supporting delivery of the HAF programme, which funds local authorities to deliver free holiday provision for children in receipt of benefits related free school meals, helping them to stay active, socially connected and supporting their wellbeing. By delivering holiday clubs themselves or opening their premises to partner organisations, schools can help to ensure that eligible children receive enriching activities and nutritious meals, returning to school feeling engaged and ready to learn. This can also support schools in enhancing pupil relationships with each other and broader connection with the school community, as well as strengthening parental engagement.

Experience from the National Wraparound Childcare programme shows that a mixed model - drawing on both school-led and PVI led approaches, as well as free and paid for

approaches within a club - can increase flexibility for families, support parents to work, and contribute to a more sustainable and inclusive local childcare offer.

Schools are also well placed to promote the HAF programme to families and to work with their local HAF coordinator to strengthen provision, drawing on their knowledge of pupil need, links with families, and partnerships with local organisations. Schools can find more information about their local authority's HAF provision on their dedicated HAF webpages.

Updated information on the HAF programme including on eligibility can be found here: [Holiday activities and food programme 2026 to 2027 financial year.](#)

Part two: Practical advice on delivering school-age childcare

Work with local authorities

Local authorities have a legal duty to ensure there is sufficient childcare in their area for children aged 0 to 14 (and up to 18 for disabled children) ¹, to support parents who are working, studying or training for work. While this statutory responsibility sits with the local authority, schools play a crucial role in helping them meet it. Schools should work in partnership with their local authority, who can provide support, advice and local insight to help shape sustainable childcare provision.

The government is investing £12.9 million in local authority funding for 2026 to 2027, which will support local authorities to work closely with schools and trusts to continue developing, refining and sustaining SAC provision. The [School-age childcare sufficiency \(including local authority capacity funding\) guidance](#) outlines the support that local authorities can provide to schools. To ensure local authorities can deliver the childcare places needed, schools are expected to:

- share information about supply and demand for childcare and contact the local authority when demand is not being met
- respond to local authority requests for data on local childcare need and existing provision delivered on or offsite
- consider how to use their own space or partnership to help ensure families can access suitable childcare
- if not delivering SAC onsite, work with their local authority to support families to find appropriate, accessible options within the local vicinity of the school
- contact their local authority to explore what support they can offer to help establish their new FBC, to meet expectations
- work with their local authority to ensure FBCs work seamlessly with existing wraparound provision, and overall improve the availability and affordability of existing provision
- engage with their local authority's HAF Coordinator and signpost HAF offerings to their benefits related free school meals pupils or consider hosting HAF provision themselves
- seek support from local authorities, if needed, to ensure understanding of Ofsted registration requirements and inspection arrangements for different SAC delivery models.

¹ Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006: [Sufficiency of childcare places in local authorities.pdf](#)

Understanding parent's childcare needs and promoting provision

Schools should ensure that parents and carers are aware what SAC is available, either onsite or in the vicinity. This could include before or after school childcare, holiday childcare or a FBC (for participating schools).

Schools should consider:

- sharing details about the different clubs and how they are run, including any activities and any costs
- asking for their feedback on the activities at the club and what else they might find useful, and making sure this is fed back as appropriate
- finding out what support parents, carers and others in the local community can offer, like running activities or volunteering
- sharing highlights and successes with parents and carers, such as the benefits to children that attend

If a school is already delivering an FBC, they must be clear how the free club will interact with a longer paid-for before school club.

To communicate these messages, schools could consider:

- a regular newsletter or mail-outs
- updating school website or social media
- using a noticeboard
- providing leaflets or posters
- sharing details of the club with local authorities

Schools should also make sure parents know that they have the [right to request](#) that their child's school delivers wraparound or holiday childcare and schools are expected to respond to the requests in a clear and transparent way, which can be from:

- parents requesting before/after school childcare
- PVI childcare providers requesting to school facilities for holiday provision

Schools lead on managing the 'rights to request' process and for making the final decision about what action to take. More information on the steps to take is in the guidance on [responding to requests for wraparound and holiday childcare](#).

When considering requests, the local authority SAC Lead should support in identifying options to meet unmet demand.

Choosing delivery models

There is no one-size-fits-all model for delivering SAC. Each delivery model has different practical considerations and benefits. Working with local authorities and childcare

providers (including other schools and PVI childcare providers), schools should consider how they could deliver SAC either on, or in the vicinity of, the school site.

Delivery models for SAC on school sites include:

- school-run provision, delivered by school staff onsite
- working in partnership with other schools or PVI providers (which also includes childminders and early years group providers) to offer wraparound or holiday childcare onsite
- commissioning PVI providers to provide wraparound or holiday childcare as a service onsite
- agreements to signpost to provision off school site, including transport arrangements
- community or cluster models (where the local authority coordinates provision for children from multiple schools on one site).

Schools can:

- provide additional wraparound or holiday places for children outside of their pupil cohort
- establish a consortium of schools to offer wraparound or holiday/HAF provision for pupils attending multiple schools in their area

Benefits of this model can be:

- supporting schools that do not have sufficient demand to run provision alone
- reducing costs by achieving economies of scale
- sharing best practice

For holiday provision, schools should assess whether demand is coming from families of children in receipt of benefits related free school meals, to help determine whether HAF, paid provision, or a mixed model is most appropriate for meeting local needs.

Adopting a mixed model approach, where HAF-funded places sit alongside paid-for childcare, can help create a more sustainable and inclusive holiday offer. This approach not only maximises the use of existing resources but also supports providers in maintaining viable business models, which in turn strengthens the overall childcare market. Mixed models can also increase flexibility for families, offering choice and convenience while ensuring that disadvantaged children continue to receive targeted support.

There are different Ofsted registration requirements depending on the delivery model used to provide SAC, including whether the provision is on or off the school site. See section on: When to register with Ofsted.

Consider partnering with private, voluntary or independent (PVI) providers

PVI providers, including childminders, play an essential role in providing SAC and can help schools increase access by delivering provision onsite or offsite, and by supporting signposting for families. Experience from the National Wraparound Childcare programme shows that schools and PVIs work effectively together, and schools are encouraged to continue these partnerships to maintain a reliable childcare offer.

Partnering with a PVI provider can bring benefits, including specialist childcare expertise, strong safeguarding practice, additional services (such as sports or enrichment activities), reduced administrative burden, opportunities for school staff to take on additional hours and provision for children with SEND.

When partnering with a PVI provider, schools should clearly define roles and responsibilities, put appropriate safeguarding and contractual arrangements in place, meet regularly, agree use of facilities. Schools may also wish to consider the provider's:

- pricing and operating model
- sustainability
- experience
- contract terms
- alignment with school outcomes
- community engagement
- ability to deliver consistent before and after school, and holiday provision
- any additional services that support pupils and reduce staff workload.

Schools should ensure they understand the relevant Ofsted registration requirements and inspection arrangements when working with PVI childcare providers. This includes being aware of any registration exemptions that may apply, particularly in relation to HAF provision. For more information see the When to Register with Ofsted section.

Offsite provision and signposting

Schools may need to support access to childcare delivered off the school site. Arrangements should be safe, practical for families, and compliant with relevant duties. Parents remain responsible for transporting children to before-school childcare and collecting them from after-school childcare. Local authorities' travel duties apply only to the main school day. Further information about local authorities' duty is set out in the [home-to-school travel guidance](#).

Where childcare is delivered offsite, schools should consider safe transfer arrangements, including escorting or transport between sites, and ensure individual needs—such as health, disability or safeguarding - are taken into account, seeking professional advice

where needed. For an FBC, if provision is offsite, [the school must make sure provision is within the vicinity of the school](#).

Any offsite location should be close to school, suitable for children's activities, convenient for families and sustainable. Possible venues include community centres, church halls, libraries, youth clubs and [Best Start Family Hubs](#). Schools may seek support from the local authority on partnership models or identifying suitable PVI providers. Parents should also be signposted to the local authority's Families Information Service for details of local childcare options.

When signposting families to offsite provision, schools should consider whether providers can collect or drop off children, establish simple and safe transfer processes, and ensure arrangements comply with the [Equality Act 2010](#). Local authorities may provide advice, though they are not required to arrange transport for childcare or extra-curricular activities.

When to register with Ofsted

Schools and childcare providers must ensure they understand when childcare provision is required to register with Ofsted and when an exemption may apply. Registration requirements vary depending on who operates the provision, the age of children and the type of care provided.

Schools delivering the provision

Some childcare provision delivered directly by a school may be exempt from Ofsted where specific [exemption criteria](#) are met. For example, where SAC is delivered by a school and all three elements of the school exemption criteria are met, the school is not required to register that provision with Ofsted. Where this exemption applies, the provision cannot be registered on the voluntary part of the General Childcare Register.

Further information is available here: [Registering and inspecting school-based provision - GOV.UK and Registering and inspecting school-based early years provision: what the updated guidance means for you – Ofsted: education](#)

Certain types of provision, such as HAF provision, may also benefit from specific [registration exemptions](#) where statutory conditions are met. Schools should ensure they are familiar with these exemptions and the relevant guidance. For more information see: [Holiday activities and food: what you need to know – The Education Hub](#).

PVI providers delivering childcare on school sites

In most cases, PVI providers are legally required to register with Ofsted although this depends on the type of childcare offered, and the age range of children cared for. Where a school commissions or hosts a PVI provider to deliver childcare on its site, the registration requirement usually applies to the PVI provider, unless an exemption applies

under the [Childcare \(Exemptions from Registration\) Order 2008](#). In some cases, there are also DfE grant conditions in place for funded programmes that require providers to be registered. For example, the FBC programme requires PVI providers delivering FBCs to be registered with Ofsted. Similarly, PVI providers funded through the National Wraparound Programme were required to be registered. Others may choose to register with Ofsted on the voluntary register, while others may be [exempt from registration](#). To ensure minimum safeguarding standards in SAC provision, the DfE strongly encourages all PVI providers to register with Ofsted, or, in the case of childminders to register with Ofsted or a childminder agency.

DfE will be providing additional resources, setting out the likely registration requirements and inspection arrangements that apply to SAC delivery models, to support schools, childcare providers and local authorities.

In addition to safeguarding, registration is important because it unlocks benefits to families, such as eligibility for Tax-Free Childcare or the childcare element of Universal Credit. School-led SAC provision, which is exempt from registration on the childcare registers, is also eligible for Tax-Free Childcare and the childcare element of Universal Credit, under their school unique reference number (URN).

Where there are safeguarding concerns in relation to a provider, which is legally not required to register with Ofsted, schools should follow their internal safeguarding procedures and otherwise contact the Local Authority Designated Officer.

Creating inclusive provision

All childcare providers should make wraparound inclusive and accessible for all children. This includes children with SEND and children considered to be vulnerable. Schools should consider the individual needs of the pupils who will be accessing the provision and make sure the provision is inclusive by:

- having a plan to ensure they can identify the needs of children with SEND – this may include working with school SENCOs
- having an appropriate offer for children with SEND, including appropriate staff to child ratios
- making sure all staff are appropriately trained to deliver quality, accessible and inclusive provision
- ensuring the arrangements for wraparound childcare are suitable and safe where children have specific support needs, for example specified in an education, health and care plan
- providing food choices that take account of cultural, religious, and specific dietary and sensory needs
- speaking to families regularly to understand individual needs and how these may change
- what transport arrangements may be necessary

Information on any wraparound or holiday provision should be included in the published SEND Local Offer.

Under the [Equality Act 2010](#), schools must make reasonable adjustments for children with disabilities.

When deciding whether an adjustment is reasonable, schools may wish to consider:

- whether the adjustment is essential in enabling a child equal access to the same provision as their peers
- its practicality
- the affordability of any one-off or ongoing costs

If a requested adjustment is not a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010, a provider is not legally required to fund it. In such cases, a provider may explore alternative funding sources. Any proposal to charge parents would need to be justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim and assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Promote and support government childcare offers

For childcare to be accessible to parents and be sustainable, it should be affordable. Schools are expected to promote government childcare offers to help parents and carers with the affordability of childcare, using established communication routes, such as parent newsletters. Schools may wish to signpost parents to [Childcare Eligibility Checker - Best Start in Life](#) so they can check their eligibility.

Schools and approved, or Ofsted-registered, childcare providers can sign up to a get a childcare provider account. This allows them to set up their bank account details and receive payments from parents who use [Tax-Free Childcare](#). Information on how a provider can sign up to TFC can be found at: [Sign up to Tax-Free Childcare if you're a childcare provider - GOV.UK](#)

Eligible parents can access:

- [Tax-Free Childcare](#) (covering 20% of costs up to £2k a year, or £4k a year for children with disabilities)
- [Universal Credit childcare](#) (support for up to 85% of their costs and where eligible 100% of their [upfront costs](#))

Schools should support the use of government childcare offers by

- setting up provision in a way that allows parents to use them, [including by signing up](#) if the school is the childcare provider.
- registering provision with Ofsted (or a childminder agency registered with Ofsted), or subject to inspection under the education inspection framework

- using systems, to allow parents to access this support. For example, if a school uses a payment provider, they should check with them to ensure parents are not prevented from accessing support they are eligible to.

These government childcare offers can also support schools, trusts, and PVI providers with the sustainability of provision.

Schools are well placed to identify vulnerable children and families and should collaborate with local authorities to ensure these families have access to relevant support, which may include HAF provision, whether it is delivered on the school site or elsewhere in the local vicinity.

Schools should ensure that provision is affordable to parents, as far as is reasonably practical. In addition, when setting fees, they may want to consider:

- benchmarking prices against other wraparound provision in the area
- the minimum that they will need to charge in order to maintain the financial viability of provision

In order for schools to [charge parents](#) for childcare, there must be a charging and remissions policy. The guidance for [charging for school activities](#) helps schools to set out their policies on charging for school activities.

Staffing

Any SAC provision will need staff or volunteers to provide the childcare itself. These individuals could be:

- school staff working in the school already (such as teaching assistants)
- staff employed specifically to work on wraparound
- individuals or groups of individuals from PVI providers, including childminders

We do not expect schools to deploy staff from their existing teaching workforce to deliver SAC. School leaders should use their judgement to identify the most appropriate people to deliver SAC.

Schools should:

- consider working with other organisations and institutions to deliver wraparound provision, including PVI providers
- consider whether to use supply staff or temporary workers to help run their wraparound provision
- exercise financial prudence when recruiting and seek best-value options
- consider the DfE and [Crown Commercial Service agency supply deal](#) if hiring agency workers
- use the DfE's [workforce toolkit](#), designed to help build and sustain a strong, skilled SAC workforce

- refer to the [improve workload and wellbeing for school staff page](#) for tools and resources to help schools adopt more streamlined practices

Ratios

The staff-to-child ratios depend on the age of the children and the qualification levels of staff. Staffing arrangements must meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety. Schools and providers must ensure that children are adequately supervised, especially while eating, and decide how to use staff to ensure children's needs are met. Schools will need to determine how many staff are needed to ensure the safety and welfare of children, considering:

- the types of activity
- the age and needs of the children, including SEND or medical needs
- if any children need 1:1 support
- safeguarding

If children who normally attend reception class during the school day, or younger children (aged 5 or under), there must be sufficient staff as stated in the [Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\) for group and school based providers](#) from paragraph 3.36.

If the childcare is being delivered by a PVI provider registered on Ofsted's Childcare register, who only provides care for children aged 6 and above, the provider should follow the ratio requirements set out in the guidance for daycare providers on the compulsory [Childcare Register: Ofsted requirements](#).

Otherwise, before and after school childcare, as well as holiday childcare, is subject to normal class size regulations, although in many cases higher ratios will be deemed more appropriate. For example, if a child receives 1:1 support during normal school hours, they should also have 1:1 support in childcare settings.

Schools should also make sure they:

- have a process for staff absences to continue to meet the correct ratios
- have enough staff to supervise children when eating or drinking
- have enough staff to support a child who is taken ill or requires medical attention

Qualifications and training

School leaders are responsible for considering the qualification and training requirements for any staff who deliver childcare and should consider whether staff training is beneficial to ensure the needs of children attending provision are met. Schools should:

- provide or arrange any training that is necessary to ensure that everyone who looks after children has suitable skills and experience

- provide training to everyone who looks after children on the procedures in the safeguarding policy
- appoint a person (they can be a provider, manager, or staff member) to be responsible for children's welfare and safety
- provide support and guidance on child protection issues to everyone who looks after children
- attend child protection training

Schools should also be aware of:

- the individual needs of the children attending the provision
- the requirements set out by the relevant regulatory bodies, such as:
 - Ofsted [education inspection framework](#)
 - Ofsted [compulsory Childcare Register](#)
 - Ofsted [voluntary Childcare Register](#)
 - [Childminder Agencies \(CMA\)](#)
 - follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements within the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework when children in reception year or younger are cared for

For PVI providers registered on the voluntary part of the general Childcare Register, at least one person looking after the children must have either a minimum level 2 qualification in an area of work relevant to the childcare provided, or training in the common core skills, and an appropriate first aid qualification.

If children in reception year or younger are present, at least one person who has a current paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate must be on the premises and available at all times. The certificate must be for a full course consistent with the criteria set out in Annex A of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework.

Schools should make sure staff have appropriate equipment so they can provide flexible and responsive care. Schools should also ensure that staff caring for children with SEND are appropriately trained and may wish to consider additional training options for staff.

One training option is an apprenticeship, which usually takes around 18 months to complete and is a mix of study and workplace learning, enabling staff to earn and learn on the job. There are a range of apprenticeships that are relevant to working in wraparound childcare. More information is available on [Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education's website](#).

Staff may also be interested in [becoming a playworker](#).

Using school space for childcare

Schools should consider where childcare could be delivered and whether the space is suitable. It should also be planned as part of the wider long term estate strategy.

Schools can deliver childcare in one or more spaces. This may include:

- communal, assembly and dining halls
- classrooms used for teaching
- unused classrooms
- non-teaching areas
- library and resource areas
- portacabins
- sports facilities
- other dedicated areas onsite

Key practical considerations include:

- safe and secure access and movement through the site — including drop-off, collection, supervision, and transitions
- the needs of SEND pupils
- pupil age – for example, if childcare is being provided for children in the early years range, the EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers will need to be followed
- how childcare will coexist with other school activities, clubs, or community use of facilities
- access to cloak areas, toilets, and handwashing/ sanitiser facilities where food is served
- cleaning and maintenance requirements
- storage of equipment needed to deliver childcare
- whether formal agreements for using the estate need adjusting or establishing

Schools need to understand who controls the use of their site outside normal hours. To do this, schools may need to engage with responsible bodies and third parties such as private financial initiative (PFI) providers, trusts, governing bodies and dioceses.

In some cases, delivery of provision may influence the current agreed use or management of estate on the land, and the responsible body may need to get appropriate permission.

[Good estate management for schools](#) has more information.

Where schools choose to let space to PVI providers to deliver childcare, they should ensure:

- there is capacity to manage lettings effectively
- a clear lettings policy is in place
- written hire agreements outline safeguarding expectations and responsibilities
- risk assessments meet the needs of the children served
- hire fees are transparent, competitive, and appropriate
- providers have appropriate insurance and safeguarding checks

For multi-academy trusts (MATs), the trust board may oversee elements of the lettings process. In some cases - including where land is owned by a third party - the rental agreement may be made directly with the landowner rather than the school.

Health and Safety and Safeguarding

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All SAC must provide a safe and secure environment for children, with arrangements that give parents confidence in the quality of care.

When schools deliver SAC on their site, existing safeguarding and child protection arrangements apply. Schools must:

- follow [keeping children safe in education](#)
- meet relevant [Childcare Register: Ofsted requirements](#)
- ensure all staff and volunteers have appropriate safeguarding training and DBS checks
- have clear policies and procedures for managing concerns
- follow [EYFS](#) safeguarding and welfare requirements when caring for reception-aged children or younger

Volunteers must be appropriately supervised. No unchecked volunteer should ever work in regulated activity.

When another organisation delivers SAC on the school site, schools must ensure appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place, including:

- the provider having suitable policies and procedures
- clear arrangements for liaison between the provider and the school
- safeguarding requirements included in leases or hire agreements
- assurance that the provider meets relevant [Ofsted or out-of-school-settings guidance](#)
- EYFS compliance where children in reception or younger are cared for

All registered childcare providers must meet the safeguarding requirements of their relevant Ofsted register.

Schools must also ensure health and safety risks are appropriately managed and proportionate to the activities being offered. Schools should follow existing guidance on their responsibilities and duties on [health and safety](#).

For SAC provision, schools must ensure that anyone working with children has the appropriate checks. This includes carrying out enhanced DBS checks with barred-list information and following the disqualification requirements for staff working with pupils under 8, as set out in [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) and the Childcare Disqualification Regulations.

Providers registered on the Early Years Register or the General Childcare Register must ensure no unchecked individual has unsupervised contact with children. Volunteers who have regular, unsupervised access to children will also be in regulated activity and must have enhanced DBS checks.

Further information for childminders is available in the [Childminders and childcare providers: register with Ofsted - registration requirements guidance](#).

Many schools will provide food as part of their childcare offer. Mealtimes and snack times for young children can be a high-risk environment for choking incidents. To minimise the chance of these incidents, providers looking after children aged 5 years old and under should familiarise themselves with how to prepare food appropriately for their age and development and may wish to refer to the [Help for early years providers: Food safety](#) page. To enable staff to react quickly if a child does choke, children of this age group should be within sight and hearing of a member of staff when eating.

Food and nutrition standards

Provision offering food as part of SAC should comply with relevant food and nutrition requirements.

The [Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014](#) (referred to as the School Food Standards) applies to all food and drink provided to pupils on school premises and during an extended school day (up to 6pm). Breakfast and after school clubs provided on school premises or at the request of the local authority/school governing board (at other premises) are required to meet the School Food Standards.

Any provision delivered on school premises which offers food as part of its SAC offer should:

- check whether they are a food business and need to [register with the local authority](#), if they regularly cook, store, handle or distribute food.
- comply with allergen regulations, be aware of pre-existing food allergies, intolerances or coeliac disease and have processes in place to ensure the availability of safe food options.
- ensure that anyone handling food receives appropriate supervision and training in food hygiene, which is in-line with the area they work in and will enable them to handle food in the safest way.
- provide healthy and nutritious food that complies with the School Food Standards
- be aware of any religious or cultural requirements when considering individual pupils needs.

Schools and providers should also refer to relevant guidance when setting up and delivering provision which offers food, including:

- [DfE guidance on school food](#), including the headteacher checklist and guidance for food other than lunch.

- [FBC guidance](#) and [blueprint](#) for planning compliant breakfast provision.
- [Food Standards Agency \(FSA\) guidance](#) on food safety, registration, hygiene and allergens.
- [Safer food, better business guidance for childminders](#), useful for small-scale provision.
- [Allergy guidance for schools](#) and [FSA allergy training](#).
- [EYFS framework requirements](#) where caring for children in reception or younger (including food safety and supervision).
- Following the [Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance](#) where caring for children in reception or younger unless there is good reason not to.
- [Local authority food safety teams](#) for advice on registration and compliance.

Providing good quality school-age childcare

Schools and providers should ensure that SAC is enjoyable and engaging, offering an environment children want to attend. Schools should consider how space, activities, resources and staffing choices contribute to the quality of provision.

Schools may choose to deploy staff with relevant training or experience, such as playwork, to support delivery. Provision before and after school, and during holidays, may look different, but where possible schools should offer a varied, flexible offer by:

- providing a range of enjoyable, enriching activities
- using stimulating indoor and outdoor spaces and resources
- avoiding relying on childcare time for homework or catch-up learning

Many schools already offer enrichment and extra-curricular activities; these can complement or sit alongside SAC.

Where provision is delivered by a PVI provider on the school site, schools should support delivery by enabling appropriate use of indoor and outdoor space, access to resources, and by working with the provider to understand and meet children's needs.

Governance

Schools and providers setting up childcare on school premises should ensure clear planning, appropriate permissions, robust safeguarding, and compliance with health and safety requirements. Provision must have defined roles, sufficient staffing, suitable facilities, and any required Ofsted registration, supported by appropriate policies, insurance and agreements.

Governing boards (or trust boards for academies) hold overall responsibility for provision established under their powers, providing strategic oversight while avoiding operational involvement.

Schools should be clear about who is responsible for day-to-day operations, ensuring roles are defined - whether provision is school-run or delivered in partnership with a PVI provider. Schools should also ensure someone has oversight of insurance arrangements, including holding the correct policies, keeping them up to date, and ensuring wraparound provision is appropriately covered. Required insurance may [include employer's liability](#), public liability, buildings and (if relevant) road traffic insurance. Schools may purchase insurance directly, via DfE's [approved framework](#), or through the [get help buying for schools service](#). Schools or trusts in the [DfE's risk protection arrangement \(RPA\)](#) should refer to the membership rules for details of cover.



Department
for Education

© Crown copyright 2026

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0, except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3.

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

About this publication:

enquiries www.gov.uk/contact-dfe

download www.gov.uk/government/publications

Follow us on X: [@educationgovuk](https://twitter.com/educationgovuk)

Connect with us on Facebook: facebook.com/educationgovuk