

Extended schools Primary and infant

'It's about empowering the community'

Extended services can range from 'catchup' classes to 'stretch' activities, encompassing everything from maths clubs to sports workshops. **Sarah Jewell** finds out what's being offered at primary and infant level

Pprimary schools across the country are offering a huge range of extended services as they aim to meet the core offer. The "varied menu" of "catchup" and "stretch" activities covers everything from fencing to foreign languages to volunteering, business studies and basketball. Many of the activities are offered in partnership with voluntary or private sector providers, and schools are working in clusters to share out their services and signpost to parents what is available.

Improvement partnerships

Portsmouth local authority has taken the strategic lead on extended services so that all its schools now deliver the full core offer, either by themselves or by signposting to other schools. The schools are divided into five community improvement partnerships that range in size from 7-22 schools.

Mark Scarborough, extended services manager for Portsmouth city council, says they have succeeded because, "we see extended services as an opportunity, not a burden for schools". Some schools, he says, are apprehensive of taking on the extended services programme but "we go to them and say this is what's happening in your area already and this is how you can join together – the most important thing is to have effective partnerships."

Once the services are up and running he finds schools come back to him saying: "We want to start these activities for ourselves because they are so popular with our parents and pupils." Communication is key, he says. "It's all about empowering the local community by identifying their needs and priorities and then telling them what's going on."

Charlotte Taggis headteacher at Charles Dickens infant school in Portsmouth, serving 186 children aged 3-7. The school is attached to a Sure Start centre and a nursery, and has worked hard to bring the parents on board. "We are in a very deprived area," says Taggis, "with lots of lone parents, teenage mums and parents who've had bad school experiences. We do a lot of counselling, self-esteem work and helping parents get back to work and we are beginning to see the benefits."

Parents are now "popping in and out all the time and are very supportive and appreciative of what we are doing". It will take time, but "we are beginning to see the impact of linking our extended services to the main core priorities in school."

Gateshead local authority has also taken the strategic lead on its extended services. Schools are providing the core offer in clusters and there are 10 clusters centred around 10 secondary schools. Caroline O'Neill, senior primary inspector for schools for Raising Achievement Service, says schools have generally welcomed the programme: "Schools in Gateshead are traditionally very



Charles Dickens infant school, Portsmouth, has worked hard to bring parents on board

positive and embrace change. We haven't had any negativity because schools are very keenly focused on doing anything to raise standards for their pupils."

Schools offer various models. "They all look very different as they try to meet the needs of their communities in innovative ways," says O'Neill.

Maths clubs

One innovative approach has been the maths clubs at Kells Lane primary school. Deputy head, Pam Nagle, started a maths club before school to boost the confidence of year 6 pupils. "It wasn't compulsory," she says, "and I tried to personalise it to the children of lower ability."

The lessons involved "fun maths" using ICT so children were more engaged, and the programme was tailored to suit individual needs. The lessons showed significant improvements: "Fifty per cent of children progressed by 10 or more months in a four-month period," says Nagle – an average-ability girl who attended regularly made "20 months' progress on the RM maths programme in four months". It was a real confidence-booster and the school now wants to start the maths club for year 5.

Kells Lane also offers clubs in drama, dance, German, African drumming, sports and more. Headteacher, Diana Hewitson, admits that when she first heard about the school putting on activities until 6pm she, "had a horror about it", but because of the way the local authority has worked with the school and the energy that everyone has put into it, "it's been wonderful for the children and we've seen them make real gains in their learning because of the confidence they've gained through their clubs."

Holiday programmes

Many schools offer activities during the holidays as well as term time. In 2005 New

Silksworth infant school and Barmston primary school in Sunderland were allocated £427,000 for extended school activities from the Lottery Young People's Fund to share between them. The fund was to target children and young people from 0-25 and the schools consulted on what young people wanted.

New Silksworth head, Gillian Mitchell, says the young people wanted more sporting activities so the school set up a holiday programme with the voluntary sector to include canoeing, cycling and camping for teenagers aged 13-19 from the local area. Mitchell says that as an extended school they wanted to support young people: "We had the funding so we are the facilitator for these activities; we fund the youth workers and we are the hub for our cluster area with other schools."

After-school clubs

Phil McAloon, area youth worker for Oxclose and District Young People's Project, which delivers these holiday activities for young people, is impressed with what the primary schools are doing: "They had a lead in this situation and they could have spent the money on the junior age range, but they spent it on an older age range and it was a daring and unusual step."

Primary schools don't usually get involved in the wider community, says McAloon, but he can now hold after-school clubs in the primary schools that can be "life-changing" for some children. Instead of hanging around the village centres and getting drunk, teenagers are diverted away from "nuisance activities". They can use the primary school facilities to get recognised qualifications, advice on drugs and health issues and training around college work. "It's very rewarding to see the impact these clubs can have on young people," says McAloon.

Turnaround Thongsley Fields, Cambridgeshire

Thongsley Fields primary and nursery school offers the full core offer of extended services including a free breakfast club, a children's centre on site, speech and language groups, playgroups, parenting classes, family learning, ICT courses and first-aid courses. It's a new school following the amalgamation of Thongsley infant and junior schools in 2002. Rachel Myer, who joined as headteacher in 2003, says everything the school does is in response to the needs of the school community. "We look after children from pre-school up to 11."

In one of the highest areas of social deprivation in the country, the school has "large families with low incomes and all the deprivation indicators that go with this set-up". Many pupils have five or six siblings and parenting classes focus on issues such as managing the transition from home to school, illness at home, bedwetting and bedtime routines. Advice is also given on drug and alcohol abuse.

Thongsley was in special measures when Myer took over but is now seen as an effective school that gives good support to the community. Myer says parents and children feel "valued and secure, and they have renewed trust in the school. Best of all, their self-esteem has been raised." She attributes improvements to the success of the extended services. Parents now understand, she says, that "their children

need to be healthy, happy and secure to access learning, and extended services were the only way to make the jigsaw puzzle – called learning – complete."

Myer says the school tries to make sure the children come in "ready to learn and leave supported for learning" and, in the process, is "raising their self-esteem and self-worth". At first she had difficulty getting to know the parents and they were reluctant to talk to her, but now "they are happy to come through the door with smile on their faces to share their problems".

Thongsley has worked hard to engage parents with their children's learning. "Speech and language is a big issue," says Myer. "We have a low level of speech and language ability and we are trying to develop social interaction skills." One way they do this is with "chatter sacks" – cloth sacks with books and tapes and toys inside, all linked around a theme. The sacks are used to build up discourse between the parents and children as part of a speech and language project.

Many services for parents and children are delivered through partnership working, with the local primary care trust, speech and language therapists, other schools and the local children's centre project manager. Overall, the core offer of extended services is going well because it is "embedded into everything the school does", says Myer. "It reaffirms our community approach." **SJ**



A healthy start to the day at Thongsley Fields' free breakfast club

Inclusion Jesse Boot, Nottingham

Jesse Boot primary school is a large three-form entry school delivering the full range of extended services for its 525 pupils. It has 200 children attending some form of club or musical activity. There are also parenting and family learning events, where children and parents work together. "We provide wrap-around childcare and have a real range of activities to extend and enrich learning," says headteacher Lynda Valentine.

The school has a health suite and a prescribing nurse who works for the whole school community. Parents, staff and children visit her and she has as many as 15 drop-in cases a day. Why is she so popular? "A lot of children prefer to see the nurse here because they feel anxious about going to the doctor," says Valentine. "They are more comfortable about popping along the corridor to get their medication." The knock-on effect of this is that attendance has improved because children are spending more time in school.

Valentine says a belief in inclusion is at the heart of what Jesse Boot offers. The school is developing personalised, integrated services that put the child and the family at the centre of everything. "Everyone comes to school and we want all the health and community services to



Perfect prescription: Jesse Boot primary school, in Nottingham, boasts a health suite with a prescribing nurse Fabio De Paola

be here; if a child has a problem we can access a range of services immediately, including speech and language therapy and advice from the child and adolescent mental health services and the multi-agency locality team."

The school works to draw all the services around the child with the help of the Common Assessment Framework lead professional. "We can't do everything ourselves," says Valentine, "we need the support of other agencies."

The school also works with the voluntary sector. The charity Relate provides a weekly drop-in service for families, with counselling on family relationships and play therapy for children. Valentine was unsure about how this service would be received but says that "on the first day a parent walked up to me and said 'this is so fantastic, it's just what I need' and there has been very positive feedback."

Extended services have also raised the school's standards, improved attendance by 1.1% and "exceeded its targets", and improved the attitude and behaviour of pupils. The children feel the school is at the heart of their community, says Valentine: "There is a good buzz, and I fundamentally feel that what we are doing is right." **SJ**

Extended schools Secondary and special

A new name for good schooling

Despite the proliferation of new initiatives in secondary schools, extended services are often seen as essential by many heads and governors. From skateboarding to leadership courses, **Julie Nightingale** finds out what's on offer

Secondary schools are faced with a continuing barrage of initiatives and, to some, "extended services" is just another one to add to that pile. But there are many heads and governors who, long before the idea was framed by policy-makers, were already pursuing their own form of extended services – without extra cash – in the belief that after-school clubs, parenting classes, adult education and activities that take their reach beyond the school walls, are part and parcel of what a modern school should be.

Community links

There's nothing "innovative" about the extended services on offer at Serlby Park school, Bircotes, near Doncaster, if innovative equates to "radically new"; rather, it's a continuation of what has existed in the community for years, says principal David Harris.

"To us, 'extended school' is just a new name for something we would define as good schooling. It's something that's appropriate for your community. If you do it just because the government says you should, it would be a disaster."

Serlby is a specialist business and enterprise college and, since 2005, one of the first "all through" schools, taking children from three to 18. It is at the heart of a large council estate in an area still recovering economically from the pit closures of the 1980s and early 1990s. The number of children who are eligible for free meals is above the national average, as is the proportion with special needs, and few parents went through higher education.

The area has its problems, says Harris, but there is still a keen sense of community pride here that the school taps into.

"There's deprivation but there's also loyalty and desire to want to do something for themselves, so what we provide as services must be shaped by local need. It's not my philosophy that the school has to control and direct. In a vibrant and proud community, that's the worst possible thing you can do."

"One of the first projects we supported in 2002 was the creation of a skateboard and BMX track to give children somewhere to play. It was initiated by the Bircotes Action Project, a community group. We set up a bank account to hold the money raised and did some of the admin. It came out of a community need and the school acted as conduit."

The roster of activities today is huge, much of it is geared to families. There is a drop-in advice and support service for parents and children with special needs, family learning where parents learn games and activities to develop children's basic skills and a "seven steps to stress-free parenting" course.

Funding is via an assortment of project grants and other temporary sources plus school budget for things like the homework club. It can be a struggle, Harris admits. "But you come back to what the community needs. And some kids need somewhere to do their homework after school in peace and in safety."

Jan Smith, the school's extended services coordinator, sees part of her role as signposting people to what is already on offer locally, which they may be unaware of, as well as talking to them about potential new services.

Study support

Penryn college, in Cornwall, has used its sports college status to develop extended services that go well beyond after-school football or tennis.

An 11-16 comprehensive in the small town of Penryn, it serves the surrounding rural area with several villages and some pockets of deprivation. Its study support programmes for students include Playing for Success, the national literacy and numeracy scheme aimed at raising attainment through sport. Penryn children who have participated have emerged with better than expected Sats results.

Activas (Activities out of school) is run in cooperation with social services, Connexions and local police and aimed at students at risk of exclusion or otherwise vulnerable. It offers skateboarding, gardening skills, a beauty course, and surfing in summer. Allied to these is an extensive range of pupil leadership programmes, which can take place during or after school and in the holidays.

In year 10, for example, students can take on a leadership role in any subject,



Flexible friends: Penryn college, in Cornwall, has used its sports college status to develop extended services that go well beyond after-school football or tennis

Special school Kirkleatham Hall, Redcar

The experience of this 4-19 special school in a small village near Redcar shows how vital consultation can be in developing extended services.

The school wanted to expand its extensive after-school programme of sports and activities by arranging for children to attend similar clubs at other schools nearer to their homes

"We believed the way forward was to integrate our young people into their local community so they could perhaps start to build friendship groups there," says headteacher Gill Naylor. "But only two-thirds of the parents said that was what they wanted. The rest wanted more diverse activities within the school itself."

Past experience of bullying in mainstream schools made some parents wary of allowing their son or daughter to go anywhere other than Kirkleatham, even for after-school activities. The school is now rethinking its plans.

Consultation with parents has brought other changes. The school



Kirkleatham Hall head, Gill Naylor

offers signing (sign language) tuition from primary to FE level and has added classes for adults after parents said they were worried their children were leaving them behind.

Extended services also bring some specific challenges for special schools. For Kirkleatham pupils, many with severe learning difficulties, continuity of staffing is important, says Naylor. Under workforce remodelling, the school has increased teaching assistants' hours to cover after-school activities so that the children are with people they know and feel comfortable with.

"It takes years to build up real relationships with our children and it's why special schools who have gone to outside providers have found it difficult," says Naylor. "But the after-school and other activities are not an add-on to us. It's a means of keeping young people engaged and providing social interaction. It's giving them something to do after school where, quite often, they have nothing to do." **JN**

from maths and music to outdoor education and dance, working towards a recognised leadership qualification in that subject or towards a generic one in sports leadership. Students add on a stint of community work of up to 30 hours during the school year, completed by a final leadership training course covering team work and communication skills. With that under their belt, they can be employed by the school on its holiday programmes and they can lead after-school activities.

Sophie Rollason, 15, completed her leadership training in the summer and works with the local primary school on after-school dance clubs. "Leading the five-year-olds and the junior kids makes you more adult," she says. "I understand how the teachers feel now when someone doesn't want to learn."

For some children, the leadership programme has turned their lives around, says Ros Bastian, the assistant head who leads community work. "Some of our leaders have excelled in lots of ways. One boy who was a difficult pupil became one of our key leaders after doing a leadership programme – and his test scores have risen too."

Swift and easy access

Extended services is generally understood to mean schools remaining open after their normal hours, but it also embraces easier access, rather than just "more".

Whitstable community college in Kent hosts a multi-agency project that brings together professionals from all local education, health and social services in one place. It serves an area of high unemployment where the number of looked-after children in school is well above average. As such, there are some acute social problems.

The multi-agency group acts as an early-intervention service, aiming to tackle the problems within a family before they become more serious for the children. They meet regularly at the school, with teachers, education welfare officers, local authority travel officers, social services and mental health teams all involved.

Based permanently in the school is Macs (multi-agency cascade service), a network of specialist services for pupils – school-based social workers, counsellors, and child and adolescent mental health and special needs staff. Funded by the county council, their presence on site has been fundamental in helping wider multi-agency working to flourish, says Carol Torode, the school's children and families support leader.

"The huge thing is that, as a group of professionals, we are trying to develop a common language and a common knowledge," says Torode.

Inner city Swanlea school, Whitechapel, London

In the beacon inner-London borough of Tower Hamlets, Swanlea comprehensive in Whitechapel serves a mainly Bangladeshi- and Sylheti-speaking community. Swanlea became a pilot extended school in 2003, working to offer a range of services for its pupils, their families and the wider community.

The school's Youth Project, an after-school club that runs from 7-9pm, supports the Every Child Matters agenda through organised sports, healthy eating and drugs awareness workshops. Run by teachers paid through the School Standards Fund, Swanlea's Saturday Club attracts 250 pupils of all ages with sports, revision and a coursework completion club.

The school remains open during the summer holidays and half-term breaks when pupils take part in fun and study support activities. It runs a maths, science and literacy summer school for primary-aged children identified by their teachers as needing additional support.

Curriculum enrichment and study skills are popular with parents who



Swanlea comprehensive, in London, became a pilot extended school in 2003

have high aspirations for their children and want to extend their learning beyond the school day. "We are helping to raise standards and aspirations through a twin approach of working with families and

establishing closer ties with feeder primaries," says extended schools manager, Vanessa Chadwick.

Swanlea has provided classes for parents and the school and worked with Tower Hamlets college and the City Lit (adult education college) to run ICT, language and literacy classes. "Classes for parents have helped them support their children's school work and improve skills," says Chadwick.

The school is well supported by a network of local agencies and values support from the local business community of the City of London, which provides reading mentors and work placements.

In its Fading Boundaries project, paid for with a grant, Swanlea works closely with three feeder primaries – Stewart Headlam, Kobi Nazrul and Canon Barnett – to ease transition. Swanlea teachers work alongside primary colleagues on targeting pupils to boost literacy and numeracy. "This approach succeeds and is feeding into the pupils' confidence," says Chadwick. **Stephen Hoare**