

27. Community Focused Schools

This section deals with:

- What is a “Community Focused School”?
- What is involved in a Community Focused School?
- Will community focused schools need to work differently?
- Who can set up programmes?
- Safeguards;
- What types of services could a school provide?
- Integrated Children’s Centres;
- Registration and inspection of childcare facilities; and
- [The Disability Discrimination Act 1995](#) and Extended Services.

Background

1. Schools play an important and pivotal role in the community. Schools not only provide education for pupils and create a community spirit amongst parents, but they also have the opportunity and often the facilities to reach out to the whole community. Governing bodies control the use of the school premises outside school hours subject to the restrictions referred to in the previous chapter entitled Control and Community Use of School Premises.

2. Many schools already provide some services to their communities and it is up to governing bodies and schools, in consultation with their partners, to develop as little or as much provision as they think suitable in the circumstances for their community.

3. Governing bodies cannot, however, provide any service that might interfere with their main duty to educate pupils or their responsibility to promote high standards of educational achievement at the school.

What is a Community Focused School?

4. A community focused school is one that provides a range of services and activities, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community. Across Wales many schools already provide some community services including adult education, study support, ICT facilities and community sports programmes.

5. The WAG issued guidance on this in circulars entitled [Community Focused Schools \(NAfW Circular 34/2003\)](#) and [Guidance on the Welsh Assembly Government Community Focused Schools Grant \(NAfW Circular 31/05\)](#).

6. The development of a community focused school is an opportunity for schools and communities to work together for the future benefit of children, young people and adults.

7. ContinYou Cymru has worked with the Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW) and the WAG to develop a vision for community focused schools in Wales and has produced information for schools and governing bodies. Information is available at the ContinYou Cymru website at www.continyou.org.uk/what_we_do/work_country/wales.

What is involved in a Community Focused School?

8. A community focused school builds on the services already provided, there is no blueprint for the types of activities that can be provided, or how they might be organised.

9. It is important that the school works closely with its LA. LAs have responsibility for community planning and they provide or facilitate a wide range of services. The LA is in a unique position to provide advice on existing provision in its area. It can offer support and direct the school towards those parts of the authority with expertise in community development or specific services.

10. [Section 27](#) of the Education Act 2002:

- makes it easier for governing bodies to provide facilities and services that benefit pupils, families and the local community;
- provides flexibility for governing bodies to enter into agreements with other partners to provide services on school premises; and
- enables governing bodies to charge for some services.

11. Irrespective of the size of the provision, it will be important in taking forward community development that the school's senior management team and the governing body each identify a member with lead responsibility for the area of work. Any new activities must not add to the existing workloads of school staff, including head teachers, without their agreement.

12. A study in 2002 found that where schools engage with their local community it has a direct impact on pupils' attainment and raised their aspirations to progress from school to further education, training and employment.

Will Community Focused Schools Need to Work Differently?

13. Most schools are likely to need to make some changes to the way they operate, for example by introducing more flexible opening hours and new budgetary arrangements because the community activities budget has to be managed separately.

14. Schools also need to work in partnership with other groups and agencies. Secondary schools may want to consider working with partner primaries or schools may want to work in clusters, with each school developing different activities and services. Partnership working ensures:

- more diverse activities that involve parents, community members and local groups, such as playgroups, sports clubs and voluntary organisations;
- a 'joined up' approach to local services involving the LA, local agencies and partnerships;
- opportunity to provide services that require specialist skills, such as healthcare or social services;
- sustainable programmes where activities and services are not over-dependent on the skills and time of a few key staff; and
- opportunities for services that are different from school activities and can present themselves as 'teacher-free'.

15. There may not always be the capacity to provide services on school premises and schools may wish to consider alternative locations. For further information, please refer to the guidance.

Who Can Set Up Programmes?

16. There are no restrictions on who can set up programmes or services. However, the governing body cannot provide a service that might interfere with its main duty to educate pupils or its responsibility to promote high standards of educational achievement. In every school and community there are key groups who will need to be consulted. They should be involved in the planning process to ensure that community focused school programmes are well organised and meet local needs.

17. Smaller programmes might be the responsibility of a separate group or committee within the school, led by governors, head teachers, LA staff or parents. For larger programmes, the school might delegate the management to existing agencies or partnerships such as the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

18. The governing body has the ultimate responsibility for deciding whether the school should offer additional activities and services and what form these should take. In taking any decisions, however, their key duties will include:

- securing supplementary funding sources for initiatives;
- safeguarding the delegated budget; and
- securing suitable insurance.

Safeguards

19. Under the [Education Act 2002](#), the governing body must consult the LA, school staff, parents of registered pupils of the school, registered pupils where this is appropriate and 'such other persons as the governing body consider appropriate' before it provides any community facilities or services. Depending on the nature of the provision proposed consideration should be given to consulting the local community, relevant agencies and partnerships, teacher unions, national council, local businesses, diocesan authorities and voluntary organisations.
20. The governing body must also abide by any provisions that may be contained in the LA's scheme for financing schools.
21. The WAG has the power to rule out certain types of activities that might be deemed inappropriate on school premises. There are no plans at present to introduce regulations to do this.
22. The LA has the power to suspend a school's delegated budget if:
- the LA considers the financial management of community services provided by a governing body to be unsatisfactory; or
 - the governing body is guilty of substantial or persistent non-compliance with any rules laid down by or under the LA's scheme for financing schools.
23. If a third party makes a claim against a governing body concerning its provision of community activities and services, the [School Standards and Framework Act 1998](#) provides for the LA to deal with the claim. But if the governing body has funds in its community services budget, the LA is entitled to reimbursement by the governing body.
24. Except in extreme circumstances, where governors have acted unlawfully or have acted individually rather than as a corporate body, the LA cannot recover the costs from individual governors.

What Types of Services Could a School Provide?

25. Local consultation will help schools agree with their partners what types of services they should offer their pupils, families or the community. See below and further details on this are given in the guidance circular.
26. Some key services could include:
- Childcare;
 - Lifelong learning;
 - Health and Social Services provision;
 - Cultural and sporting activities;

- Youth Services;
- Out of hours learning; and
- Community services.

27. [The Education Act 2002](#), permitted school governing bodies themselves to provide childcare, whether or not in partnership with others, on the school site. Schools need to work closely with the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) in their local area in the planning of childcare services. In some areas the EYDCP is a sub-group of the wider Children's Partnership, whereas in others the Children's Partnership itself functions as an EYDCP.

28. Children's Partnerships may be able to involve schools in initiatives involving more extensive support, such as Sure Start and Integrated Centres.

29. Schools are also encouraged to offer their own activities or programmes that reflect the needs of their own local community.

Integrated Children's Centres

30. The WAG wishes to see continued development of integrated centres as a joint initiative between local communities, the voluntary sector, education, health and social services.

31. The centres should not be stand-alone buildings but the nucleus of a programme of integrated children's services. They should be multi-functional and multi-agency, linking a network of providers such as parent and toddler groups, play groups, childminders, out of school clubs, adventure playgrounds and other leisure activities for young people to provide enrichment and skills for children, families and communities. They should also incorporate part time education provision for three year olds as an important part of the network. Services such as play groups, childminders and informal carers could be affiliated and supported in outreach settings and through multi-disciplinary training programmes.

32. Other activities could include parenting support and a base for health visitors. The centre-based network of services should build on and enhance existing provision and on the strengths of community groups. Particularly in rural areas, transport difficulties may mean that the activities at the centre are a relatively small proportion of the overall network of services. In some areas, agencies work in partnership, led or commissioned by social services, to provide children's or family centres that work with families where child protection is a significant issue, often on a referral basis. These centres can be seen as contributing to the local network of provision, delivering a specialist element, either exclusively or as part of a wider programme of provision for the local community.

33. At an Integrated Children's Centre you will find:
- Provision of high quality early years education;
 - Provision of childcare support services to children and their families;
 - Support for children with special needs;
 - Provision of adult education, parenting support and community education teams;
 - Multi-agency teams from health, education and children's services;
 - Extended day/year round provision for childcare and family support;
 - Open access play;
 - Breakfast and After School Clubs; and
 - Holiday Clubs.

The precise services to be provided in any centre-based network will depend on local circumstances. Community focused schools can act as a resource for local multi-disciplinary services for children.

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) – Registration and Inspection for Childcare Facilities

34. Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) register and inspect day care that is provided for children under the age of eight years for over 2 hours a day, and for 6 or more days a year. This applies when the main purpose of the day care is to look after the children other than in the course of providing them with education. Thus provision which is not part of the usual school day's educational function, such as after school clubs or breakfast clubs, will be caught by the requirement to register.

35. [The Childcare Act 2006](#) introduced a new regime in England, which provides for the registration of childcare providers; however, it did not change the position in Wales. In Wales the relevant legislation remains the [Children Act 1989](#) and the [Care Standards Act 2000](#), which provides for the registration of day care providers and childminders.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Extended Services

36. In the [Disability Discrimination Act 1995](#) (DDA), as amended by the [Disability Discrimination Act 2005](#), schools have duties under [Part 2](#) as employers, under [Part 3](#) as service providers (and in due course, as public authorities) and under [Part 4](#) as education providers. When governors of extended schools provide extended services, they will need to be clear as to which part of the Act is engaged and impacts upon their functions and responsibilities towards disabled pupils, users of these services or employees. It is possible that governors' responsibilities might change according to the service being delivered, and why and to whom it is being delivered.

37. When services are provided by a third party on schools' premises, either independently of the school or on behalf of the school, governors will need to establish who will be regarded under the DDA as the service provider with the responsibility to make "reasonable adjustments" and/or access improvements. This will ensure that disabled people are not unjustifiably discriminated against in their access to the service. This is a complex area of the law and governors might find it prudent to obtain expert advice.

The Law

[The Education Act 2002](#); Sections 27 and 28

The [Disability Discrimination Act 1995](#) (DDA)

The [Disability Discrimination Act 2005](#)

[The Children Act 1989](#)

Guidance

Community Focused Schools – NAFW Circular 34/2003

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/publications/circular/circulars03/NAFWC342003?lang=en>

Guidance on the Welsh Assembly Government Community Focused Schools Grant - NAFW Circular 31/05

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/publications/circular/circulars05/1560276/?lang=en>

[Day Care \(Application to Schools \(Wales\) Regulations 2005](#) (SI 2005/118)

