



Selecting a high quality provider to run childcare at your school





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Introduction

This document sets out a best practice guide for schools that wish to select a childcare provider to run from the school site. This follows on from stage 4 of the *Developing Childcare Provision – Guide for schools*. Please ensure you have completed stages 1–3 of this guide before proceeding. You can find this document at www.westsussex.gov.uk/childcaresufficiency.

Your school has the responsibility to ensure that any selection process is open, fair and transparent. The process must be owned and led by those responsible for the governance of the school. For example, the Governing Body, the Academy Trust or Diocese. For the purpose of this document, we will refer to this as the Governing Body. This document sets out a best practice guide on how to design and manage the selection process.

Although the provision will be run by an independent childcare provider, the quality and ethos of the selected provider will reflect on the school which is why it is important to follow a comprehensive, managed process that is right for both the school and the provider.

Throughout the process the following principles should be adopted:

- An open and transparent process must be promoted throughout all steps.
- There must be evidenced based decision making to reduce the risk of challenge to both the school and the Local Authority.
- A robust audit trail must be kept.
- Consistent information must be distributed to all potential applicants.
- Confidentiality must be maintained at all times.

If you haven't already, please contact the Family Information Service (FIS) by completing the online form available here www.westsussex.gov.uk/childcaresufficiency. FIS will be able to arrange for you to be contacted by your local Early Years and Childcare Adviser to support you through all aspects of this process.

PLEASE ENSURE YOU READ THIS GUIDE IN FULL BEFORE PROCEEDING AS THE STEPS DO NOT ALL WORK IN ISOLATION

STEP 1 | Planning and preparation of the selection process

This stage is extremely important in order to ensure you can meet your planned outcome.

Setting up high quality, sustainable childcare takes time and whichever provider you select, they will need time to recruit staff, register with Ofsted and potentially make some adjustments to the space from which they will be operating to name but a few elements. It is crucial to be realistic with your timescales.

Getting childcare provision right is not a quick process and your plans should take this into consideration in order to ensure you create a high quality setting within your community. This process can take anywhere between 6–12 months, possibly longer if your project includes building alterations.

You should devise a timetable which breaks down the dates and times required for the selection process, bearing in mind that the provider will have some work to do prior to opening. For example, if you select your provider on the last day of the summer term, it is unlikely they will have enough time to go through the registration process in order to open in September.

You should already have minuted approval (see step 1 of *Developing Childcare Provision – A guide for schools'* document) to proceed with selecting a childcare provider from the Governing Body and now need to decide who will be part of the panel that will devise and carry out the process to select a provider. Best practice would be to include a minimum of 3 to 5 people but this can be flexible to meet your needs.

If you are looking for an Early Years provider, it would be good practice to include the lead for early years or a reception teacher. Your panel must always include someone from the Governing Body.

Also consider the panel's current roles and standing in the community. For example, if a governor is also the manager of a local nursery, will this be a conflict of interest or a welcomed source of knowledge?

It may help to think of this as similar to your schools staff recruitment process. There must be a set evaluation criteria for applicants and a clear and transparent scoring system which is evidence based. This will support you in your decision making. You will find examples in the appendices.

As part of the planning, you must also consider what resources this will require and any potential cost implications. For example:

- Will you need to release any staff from teaching time or other roles to support this process?
- What administration will this require and who has the capacity to coordinate tasks (for example, sending out application packs and collating information as it is received)?

STEP 2 | Expressions of interest

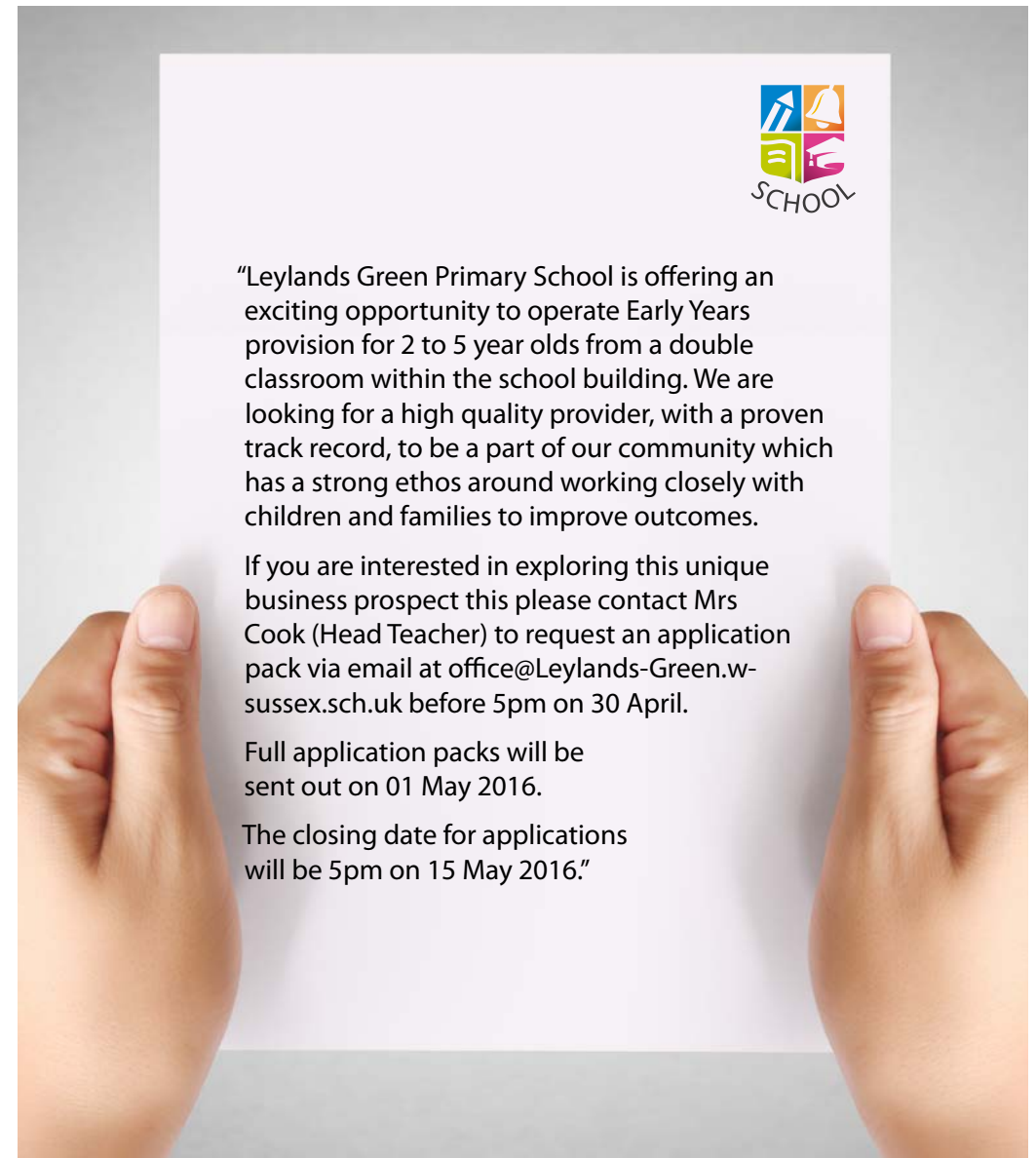
You must ensure you write to all the childcare providers in your area advising them of the opportunity to open childcare provision on the school site. This will ensure both fairness and transparency and must also include childminders. A list of these can be obtained from the county council website www.westsussex.gov.uk/fis.

You can decide how far you advertise depending on your circumstances but be prepared to explain your decision making should you be challenged. A minimum of 3 mile radius of the school is encouraged, depending on the number of potential applicants this would achieve.

It is advised that in the first instance you send out a request for expressions of interest to identify providers who would like to apply. This saves you sending out lengthy application packs to people who are not interested in the opportunity.

An example of how this could be worded is shown opposite.

In addition to contacting local providers directly, you could also consider how else you might promote the opportunity. For example, via the school website or newsletter.



STEP 3 | Application packs

The application pack should include:

- Information about the school including a covering letter from the Governing Body, a map of the school's designated area and a prospectus.
- A breakdown of the times, dates and the process for the selection of a provider.
- The application evaluation criteria (please see Appendix 1 for an example).
- A list of documents to be submitted. For example:
 - 3 year cash flow forecast.
 - Business Plan.
 - Most recent Ofsted Inspection Report (if applicable).
 - Specified Policies – for example, safeguarding, admissions, equality of opportunity, health and safety.
 - References (be clear on which stage of the process these may be taken up and who are suitable to act as a reference).

If a provider calls the school to discuss the application process you must decide whether you enter into this discussion. Depending on the content, you may need to contact other potential applicants to ensure that they have been given the same information/guidance at the earliest opportunity. To help you make the decision, you should consider whether or not the information shared gives the applicant an unfair advantage.

Potential providers may also request to visit the school. Again, you need to decide if this is something you will offer in the covering letter from the Governing Body. You also need to think about how this will be managed and who would be available to carry out these visits.



STEP 4 | Reviewing and scoring

Adequate time must be allocated for the panel to review and score all applications as per your planned timeline. Consider how long you may need to objectively look at each application and block out time accordingly.

All applicants must be treated equitably so that no unfair advantage is given to any one application.

Deadlines for applications should be strictly kept to. Late submissions should be excluded.

You must develop a clear and transparent scoring system that is evidence based to support you in your decision making, as well as to reduce the risk of challenge to the school and the Local Authority. There must be a robust audit trail.

Following the review of the applications, the panel may decide to rule out some of the applicants based on their scoring system and related evidence. These applicants must be informed and the school must be prepared to give evidence based feedback.



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STEP 5 | Visits



Best practise would be to have 2 of the evaluation panel carry out the visits. Ensure the same panel members carry out all the visits for consistency. For obvious reasons, the visit should be sensitive to the needs of the provider and having more than 2 adults visiting may be disruptive to the children attending.

You must plan how the visits will be carried out. Adults with clipboards can be quite intimidating for staff and children and you want to see the childcare provision operating as it would on any day.

Scoring should be based on the professional views of those attending and all findings should be fed back to the evaluation panel. Evaluation criteria should be set before the visit including a scoring system.

Following the visits, the panel may decide to rule out some of the applications based on their scoring system and related evidence. These applicants must be informed and the school should be prepared to give evidence based feedback.

You may decide to only use the presentation/interview when the scoring of both the application and the visit have been close between two or more applicants. You can make you decision based purely on the outcome of steps 4 and 5.

You can only do this if this was clear to the applicants in the application pack. If this is the case, and you are ready to select a provider then please go to step 7.

STEP 6 | Interviews / presentations

If you decide to use this step, the Governing Body should set a question for all providers to respond to in a 10 minute presentation in front of the Evaluation Panel. This can be followed by a question and answer session based on the application they submitted. Example presentation questions could include:

- What do you think makes high quality childcare provision?
- What are the opportunities and challenges of running a childcare business on a school site?
- How will you work in partnership with the school and local community?

Make sure that the room and equipment that has been requested by the applicants is available for the presentation.

The evaluation criteria should be set, based on the question, before the interviews/presentations and score sheets taken on the day on which to take notes.

Be prepared to answer questions from the candidates following the interview.

The Evaluation Panel must refrain from discussing other providers bids at all times.



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STEP 7 | Informing applicants of outcomes

Following the presentations, the panel must review the scoring from all aspects of this process and make a decision on which provider has been successful.

The panel must decide the following;

- Who will inform the applicants of the outcome?
- How feedback will be given?
- What the appeals process will be?

Once the successful applicant has accepted, you should also inform parents.



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STEP 8 | Licences

Once the successful provider has been selected and has accepted, the school needs to contact the Valuation and Estates Team to ensure a licence* can be drawn up in time for opening.

This is a legal document which will be agreed by the school, the provider and the legal department at a meeting which will need to be planned.

This covers a wide range of including:

- Rent
- Notice Periods for either party
- Insurance requirements
- Access to the building

There is a cost implication to this which is usually taken on by the provider.



* Schools who are not controlled and run by the local authority, for example, Academies, Voluntary Aided, Free Schools, Foundation and Trust schools, will need to ensure they comply with their own governance in terms of a lease/licence.

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STEP 9 | Communication

In addition to the licence, it is important that the school and the provider work through any additional items which need considering and including in an agreement. Examples to think about include:

- How the provider and school will communicate?
- Who will be the main contact?
- Will there be regular planned meetings? And what will these cover?
- Sharing of equipment/resources. What is the process if something is broken/lost etc.?
- How parents will contact the setting?
- How parents will access the setting?
- What will the rent include? Consider consumables such as cleaning, toilet rolls, light bulbs etc.
- How will the setting be marketed? Will the school advertise in newsletter? Put flyers in book bags? Can the setting have signage up and where?



In addition to the above, for school aged provision:

- Do the school want to consider subsidising any places using Pupil Premium funding? How could this be administered?
- Where will children be collected from? Classrooms? Or a designated space such as the school library?
- Does the setting have transport/a minibus? Where will they park?

There will be other aspects to consider which are specific to your school, the premises and the provider. It is recommended that such an agreement is reviewed termly for the first year of operating and then you can decide how regularly this is needed.

STEP 10 | The grand opening!

Once all this is complete, you are ready to move forward and open! Congratulations!



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APPENDIX 1 | Application evaluation criteria example

All applicants must submit a Business Plan, including a 3 year cash flow forecast. These documents must, as a minimum, cover the following evaluation criteria. Each application will be scored out of 5 for each of the criteria.

1. Business management and financial sustainability

You must show how you will be able to stay open for at least 3 years. The financial information you provide must show your predicted income and expenditure for 3 years. You may also detail any practical plans you have of how you intend to keep places filled over this period. This should include a strategy for marketing.

Consideration should be given to:

- Do fees offer value for money to parents?
- Are staff wages competitive based on qualifications and experience? And do your financial projections include all associated on-costs?
- Are resources and equipment high quality and long lasting?
- What is your plan for contingencies?

2. Management

Your business plan should include information about the management team, staff and general operation of the childcare provider such as staffing levels, rotas and deployment, training opportunities for staff, staff recruitment and retention, staff supervision and support, etc.

3. High quality

You must show how you are committed to providing high quality inclusive early education/childcare in your setting. An important part of this is demonstrating how you use self-evaluation and reflective practice to assess your own work, learning and developments.

This means that you have staff with the relevant qualifications and that you have evidence that you will use quality improvement processes to improve the quality of the provision and practice.

Your business plan should have details of how you will monitor your service and what systems you will use to do this. It should also give information about how you will regularly evaluate your provision.

4. Equality and diversity

You must explain how you will actively promote and support access to your childcare provider to meet all children's individual needs. This could include practical steps, policies, training and resources, etc. Please include details of how you intend to meet your requirements within current legislation and make "reasonable adjustments" to promote inclusion within your childcare provider. Please remember to think in broad terms about inclusion and accessibility. This is not just about physical access to the childcare provider. You must provide your admissions policy. Your business plan should have details of how you will actively promote your childcare provider as a fully inclusive provision, and that you will welcome each child and family as individuals.

5. Partnership working

How will you work in partnership with the school and other local partners/agencies to support the needs of the children and families using the service?

Describe how will you build partnerships with parents and ensure that the needs of individual children and their families are met. How are the views of the parents and children taken into account?

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APPENDIX 2 | Visit evaluation criteria example

Each visit will be scored out of 5 for each of the following criteria.

1. Environment

- Are the furniture/equipment/resources appropriate for the children attending?
- Does the environment support and promote child-directed and child-initiated play?
- How does the environment promote independence?
- Are the children engaged?
- Is the environment safe and clean?
- Is the atmosphere friendly, and are you made to feel welcome?

2. Staffing

- Are staff interactions with children warm and positive?
- Are staff spending time talking to, listening to and playing with children?
- Are appropriate staff ratios being maintained?
- Is there evidence of good leadership and communication?

3. Planning

- Is there evidence of engaging/challenging/stimulating activities?
- Is there an appropriate balance of indoor and outdoor activities?
- Are there opportunities for children to make independent play choices with a wide range of experiences?
- Does the setting plan effectively to meet the individual needs of all children?



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Contact Us

You can contact the Family Information Service for further information and guidance.

WEBSITE

www.westsussex.gov.uk/family

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OPENING HOURS

Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm