



# Community Use of School Premises: A Guidance Toolkit for Schools



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well attended. All evening activities are cross community and advertised widely through the community, for example, shops, local health centre and on the school website.

## OUTCOMES

The availability of a venue for community use has made a vast improvement to not only the educational outcomes of the pupils in the Stewartstown community but has had a hugely positive impact on the village of Stewartstown, with local children, young people and adults now having access to a venue that is within reach, fit for purpose and affordable.

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## RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL – SELF-FINANCING MODEL

### St Mary's Primary School, Kircubbin

*"Don't be afraid of what could go wrong. Start slowly and try to minimise those risks. If relationships are right from the start, the whole team including our children are moving in the same direction".*

Open 8.00 am–6.00 pm Monday–Friday 50 weeks per year

### BACKGROUND

St Mary's is a small Primary School situated in the Ards peninsula. There are 6.5 teaching staff, including the teaching Principal, Mr Dorrian. St Mary's does not meet the criteria for Extended Schools although sited in a Sure Start area.

The Principal described how when he first arrived in post six years ago, the only after school activities on offer for children were hurling and camogie. After consulting with the pupils and involving parents on what they would like, interest was expressed in introducing mini rugby and modern dance for KS2 pupils.

As parents had been involved in the process, they were aware of the numbers required to attend to ensure financial viability and agreed £1 per session – an affordable rate to cover the cost of coaches. Such was the success of the KS2 activities, KS1 pupils and parents expressed a keen desire to also participate.

### HOW IT WORKS

#### Programme and Practicalities

The school now provides a comprehensive out of school hours service and is viewed as a vital hub for both pupils and members of their local community. The Trustee, Governors and Principal were approached by a number of external bodies to use their premises to deliver healthy living activities, adult ICT and traditional Irish music classes for young people and adults. Wrap around care for children is available from 7.30 am–6.00 pm Monday–Friday and during holidays. The Principal advises in order to make the best availability of the school facilities you should consider programming a number of activities on the same evening, to maximise the opportunities to the community and cut down on operational management issues of the building.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8.00-8.55 am *Breakfast Club	8.00-8.55 am *Breakfast Club	8.00-8.55 am *Breakfast Club	8.00-8.55 am *Breakfast Club	8.00-8.55 am *Breakfast Club
	9.00-11.00 am Soccer			
2.00-4.00 pm Modern Dance		2.00-4.00 pm Hurling/Camogie	2.00-4.00 pm Irish Dance/ Rugby/Golf	
	3.00-4.00 pm Guitar Club/Soccer	3.00-4.00 pm Guitar Club		Hurling/Camogie Summer Term
2.00-6.00 pm Wrap Around Care	2.00-6.00 pm Wrap Around Care	2.00-6.00 pm Wrap Around Care	2.00-6.00 pm Wrap Around Care	2.00-6.00 pm Wrap Around Care
7.00-9.00 pm Pilates		7.00-9.00 pm Boxercise		

*\*Children pay between 30p and £1 depending on what they choose*

Each day, the school offers a service to working parents (not exclusive to St Mary's parents) of wrap around care 7.30 am-6.00 pm through an arrangement with a private day care provider using a spare classroom. The provider and Trustee have entered into a service level agreement while running costs are built into the rental agreement of the classroom. The breakfast club is delivered by the school meals staff, with supervision by school staff. The Principal co-ordinates operational issues such as standards of cleaning, programming, access, security and billing. The community use is reported on through quarterly Board of Governor meetings.

## OUTCOMES

While the parents are responsible for paying for after school activities and community users pay for the use of the premises, the school is just about able to cover heating and lighting but does not make any profit. The Principal would argue the benefits of opening up the school outweigh the problems and views the community as the winners. He reports he *"nearly needs to chase the young ones home after school"* and believes there has been a very positive effect on the children, particularly those with some challenging behaviours. He cites sound relationships as being key to the success eg negotiating with caretakers/cleaners to leave certain areas to the last to facilitate extracurricular use. Suggested improvements would be to tighten handover procedures post cleaning, to ensure the school is left fit for purpose for the next morning and to introduce a tick list system inviting the nominated person to take responsibility for leaving the school fit for purpose to deliver the curriculum.

Transport is a problem in rural areas. However, through sound relationships with the ELB, agreement has been reached to allow KS1 bus pupils to travel home at 3.00 pm. KS2 pupils require collection by parents/carers.

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## SCHOOL AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN PARTNERSHIP

### Edenderry Nursery School/Lifestart

The Edenderry Nursery School (Shankill) and the Lifestart Foundation are engaged in a partnership project aimed at supporting local children make the first important step into formal education by enabling parents to support their child's transition into nursery education. Many children entering nursery school are ill prepared for this new learning environment and have not as yet acquired the intellectual, emotional and social skills necessary to derive the maximum benefit from nursery education. Children falling behind in this important developmental stage are much more likely to enter primary school education with marked disadvantages.

Empirical evidence\* suggests that the home-learning environment is the most important single determinate of child development outcomes and that parents can be educated to promote learning in the home, to understand how transitions affect individual children and to develop the skills to make the transition into nursery school a positive developmental experience. Through the partnership project the Lifestart Foundation has placed a Family Visitor in the nursery school who is delivering the Lifestart Home-based Parenting Programme to parents of pre-nursery children living in the school's catchment area. The Foundation contributes the Family Visitor's salary and meets associated costs and school's contribution to the project is in the form of work space and overheads.

The Foundation benefits from the school's community location and the access it provides to parents and the school benefits because children whose parents have received the Lifestart programme are school-ready and well prepared for nursery learning.

### Arc Project

The 'Active Respectful Communities: Ardoyne & Shankill Together', project is a partnership model between Holy Cross NS, Edenderry NS, Glenwood PS, Holy Cross Boys' PS, Wheatfield PS, Holy Cross Girls' PS and Community Relations In Schools (CRIS), funded under the Contested Spaces Programme, OFMDFM & Atlantic Philanthropies.

The project operates at a whole school level on a cross community basis and provides numerous opportunities for sustained contact between children, parents/guardians, and staff from all six schools. Collaboration and sharing is at the heart of all operations. The project aims to further relationships and trust between participants and contribute to the building of more peaceful and confident communities, together.

\* Meluish, T (2008) *Sure Start DCSF UK*

The initiative has two main focus areas, 'Early Years & Parenting' and 'Shared Space' programmes. Training and activities within these areas takes many shapes. For instance shared history, photography, parenting courses, residential programmes for adults and a range of dedicated community relations focussed courses that link directly to PD&MU and that incorporate subjects such as drama, sport, and IT, for school pupils across the entire school.

### The Our Shared Vision Project

Edenderry Nursery School provides a comprehensive programme of support to parents through its partnership with the Our Shared Vision Project. Along with five other partners Edenderry Nursery secured funding through the Big Lottery's Live and Learn Project to support some of the most vulnerable and hard to reach families within disadvantaged communities in Belfast.

Many of the parents accessing the Our Shared Vision (OSV) programme have had poor educational experiences and have been impacted by factors such as the paramilitary conflict, drug and alcohol misuse and mental health illness. These barriers to learning are impacting children who are coming into nursery school with poor language and communication skills, attention and listening difficulties and general behavioural issues.

Edenderry Nursery and the OSV Project address these barriers to learning by making parents feel they are an integral and valued part of the school environment. Through a range of activities and courses parents increase their self-esteem and self-confidence, increase their knowledge and understanding of child development and are encouraged to access a range of relevant service providers within their community.

This needs-led programme is delivered by an OSV family learning worker based within the nursery five days a week and over the last three years over 330 parents and extended family members have been welcomed through the doors of Edenderry Nursery. They have accessed a range of programmes including accredited and non-accredited training, positive parenting courses, health and wellbeing workshops such as stress management and healthy eating, parent and child activities, dad-only events, 1-to-1 support, volunteering, signposting and support with transition.

Parents have also been able to access a number of resources to support home-learning.

*"It doesn't make school separate from home. She associates me with her school and that's great. I think you don't realise just how much education happens at home. Children learn a lot at home. It is very important to be learning together".  
A parent who has accessed the OSV parenting project (source: external evaluator's Interim Report on Our Shared Vision Project, Nov 2012, p40).*

## POST PRIMARY VOLUNTARY GRAMMAR – MULTIPLE USER MODEL

### St Patrick's Grammar School, Armagh

*"The Saturday school gives my son and my daughter a great experience to spend several hours in a safe environment where they make friends and use their native language. I notice that now they are more confident in their Monday-Friday school"*  
Saturday School Parent

### BACKGROUND

St Patrick's Grammar School originated in 1838 and grew steadily to accommodate the 750+ students who attend today. The school sits alongside St Patrick's Cathedral and has several playing fields stretching from the back of the school out along the Moy Road.

The indoor and outdoor facilities of the school are made available to a wide range of user groups, including school staff and students. There are no formal contracts. Users are very appreciative and some say that were it not for the school accommodating them their activities simply could not take place.

The school is not motivated by profit as much as by a desire to service local and regional needs. However, we do ensure that the school is not subsidising community use.

While the school enjoys a very pleasant setting beside the cathedral on a hill overlooking Armagh, it is worth noting that it is set amid electoral wards that are deemed to be areas of considerable social disadvantage and are listed for Neighbourhood Renewal. Many pupils of the school live in these areas. However, at present, the school does not receive any funding under the Extended Schools programme.

### HOW IT WORKS

#### Practicalities

Interested Groups contact the Principal, the bursar or the teacher who co-ordinates the use of the playing fields for approval to use facilities and agree rates. Once access to school use has been approved, the school's insurance is extended to cover individuals and groups coming onto the premises.



It is vital to ensure that classrooms and other facilities of the school are *“left as they were found”* so as not to disrupt the key educational function of the school. This can be assisted by having a caretaker on duty, by having a *“plan”* of the classroom layout to facilitate restoring it for normal use, by having dedicated storage facilities in rooms used by external groups. The co-operation of teaching staff in facilitating use of their rooms is crucial and must always be acknowledged.

The school does not suffer a net loss from the access it gives to external user groups and indeed in recent years has recorded some income. It is necessary to include costs for administration, including staff time, telephone calls etc.

## Programme

### Armagh Pipers Club

Over the 40 years of its existence Armagh Pipers have used many small and inadequate venues around Armagh. In 2004 the principal agreed the use of 25 classrooms on Monday evenings from 6.00 pm to 9.00 pm, as well as occasional use of larger venues such as the assembly halls and facilities for weekend workshops. As many as 300 children and young people avail of the tuition on Monday evenings.

### GAA “centre of excellence”

There has been a link with the GAA for many years through use of the school football pitches in spring and summer. In recent years ladies teams and junior teams have been to the fore in seeking access. In the winter months these teams, and also senior teams, use the indoor facilities such as the gymnasium, volleyball court, basketball courts and the fitness suite. A teacher monitors and co-ordinates timetabling of facilities.

GAA use of classrooms for training referees and coaches has increased greatly and this includes evening and weekend seminars requiring access to computers/data-projectors/interactive whiteboards. These seminars usually require food which is provided by the school catering staff.

### Polish and Lithuanian Saturday Schools

The Polish and Lithuanian groups need several classrooms every Saturday and occasional use of the assembly halls or gymnasium, as well as the dining room for their own snacks at lunchtime. The teachers require access to photocopiers and other equipment to prepare teaching materials each Saturday. Their focus is on developing and sustaining the language, culture, games, dance and other traditions of their native countries. Access to the school is at a greatly reduced rate.

## St Patrick's Cathedral

Occasionally the school provides catering for a major event after a ceremony in the cathedral. The school has the capacity to serve dinner to 850 people, availing of the expertise and equipment of the Armagh City Hotel and with a major "team effort" on the part of many members of the school's staff.

### OUTCOMES

The GAA (Croke Park headquarters staff) recently reported that they found the school's facilities and services, including access to ICT and photocopiers, to be perhaps the best they have access to anywhere in Ireland.

While the Polish and Lithuanian children attend local primary schools where English is the predominant language, the Saturday School experience allows these children to spend several hours in an environment where only their own native language is spoken. It is reported that this greatly boosts their self-esteem and their confidence.

The Monday evening music classes attract many local primary school children and we increasingly notice that attending these classes awakens a desire among the boys to attend this school for their post primary education.

## IRISH MEDIUM POST PRIMARY – EXTENDED SCHOOLS MODEL WITH CO-ORDINATOR

### Colaiste Feirste School

*"The school is in a lovely old house and new building in the Beechmount area of Belfast. No matter who you speak to in the area they have a story to tell about Beechmount House and its history. It is great that the school are expanding into the former City Council site of Beechmount Leisure Centre and plan to continue to offer leisure facilities to the community."*

Parent

### BACKGROUND

Coláiste Feirste is unique in being the only Irish medium post primary school in Belfast. Founded in 1991 with just 9 pupils the college now has 563 pupils in (2013/14). Pupils are drawn from 14 primary schools in the greater Belfast area and beyond. The school, for young people aged 11-19, is all ability and all subjects are studied through the medium of the Irish language with a choice of 26 subjects at GCSE and 21 subjects post-16. The school has its roots firmly fixed within the Gaeltacht Quarter and the wider community.

Coláiste Feirste's premises include Beechmount house which is a 250 year old listed building, a renovated 1930s block and a 2005 purpose-built block. The building of an extended science/technology block and a new sports centre on the site of the Beechmount Leisure Centre is planned to commence in 2014.

Cairde Cheathrú na Gaeltachta - Friends of the Gaeltacht Quarter - has been established to support and promote the Irish language community and culture and use of the school premises by the community. Funding is sought to support this through grants from various funding bodies.

### HOW IT WORKS

#### Programme and Practicalities

Application can be made to the Bursar for use of the school premises. Information required include details of the purpose for which the facilities are required and copy of insurance certificate. The Principal and Governors approve use of the school buildings.

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Sports Clubs using the school premises include the Jiu Jitsu Club who moved to the school in January 2009 after the Beechmount Leisure Centre closed. They use the Halla Mór - big hall - every Friday evening from 6.00 pm-8.00 pm. There is a session for Juniors and a session for Seniors.

The school premises are used for one off and yearly events by the GAA Ulster Council to train coaches for hurling and by a local community football club. Cultural events, book launches and art exhibitions during Féile an Earraigh and Feile an Phobail are also hosted by the school.

Various local community groups and organisations use the school premises for yearly or one off events including Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, Barnardos, Glór na Mona, West Belfast Partnership Board, Forbairt Feirste and the Belfast Regional Branch of Irish Dancers, Taylor School of Dancing, Feile an Phobail, Andersontown Feis, Comhdháil.

### Extended Schools and After School Activities

Being Healthy	Enjoying, Learning & Achieving	Enjoying, Learning & Achieving	Living in Safety & with Stability	Experience Economic Environmental Well-Being	Contributing Positively to Community & Society
Breakfast Club	Environmental Club	Homework	Transition Support Year 8	Summer Schemes	Irish for parents
Cookery Clubs	After School Club	Maths Support	Mentoring Year 13	Young Business Enterprise	Parent Support
Sports Coaching	Dance	Extra Classes GCSE	Counselling	Gaisce - President's Award	Drugs Awareness
Camogie Club	Music Tuition	Study support ICT	Transition Support small group work	Residential Trips	Suicide Awareness
La Sláintiúil Health Days	Choir/singing	French Club	Club Cairde Friendship Club	European Languages Day	Beechmount Leisure Centre Development
	Drama Club	Jiu-Jitsu	Child Bereavement		European Heritage Day
	Art				