



The 'go to' guide

A signposting tool for extended schools



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This guidance document was written in 2009 for ContinYou by Dawn Gilderoy. It was produced by Paddy O'Dea (editing) and Paul Mepham (design).

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About ContinYou

ContinYou is a national learning charity that aims to open up opportunities for learning through:

- working directly with individuals, schools, families and communities
- developing innovative provision that demonstrates effective practice
- sharing knowledge about 'what works' with others
- acting as advocates for learning that is accessible to everyone.

Our vision is of a world where everyone has the chance to transform their lives through learning, so that they can be confident, achieve and help build supportive families and strong communities.

We offer a wide range of innovative programmes, resources, training and consultancy in the fields of: community-based learning; health improvement; regeneration; lifelong learning; extended services in schools; and family learning and parental support.

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Preface

The Children's Plan has set out the government's long-term vision to improve schools in England. It has laid down the challenge of creating a consistently excellent system, where all schools reach the best level. The Plan emphasises that, more than ever before, families will be at the centre of excellent, integrated services.

In putting the needs of children and families first, we need to provide services that make more sense to the parents/carers, children and young people who are using them.

This 'go to' guide will support schools to provide services that meet the requirements of children, young people and their families.

Subsequently, the government has expressed its ambitions for children in the White Paper, 21st Century Schools: A World-Class Education for Every Child. That ambition aims to make England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up in. World-class schools and world-class standards for every community are seen as central to the realisation of this ambition.

The 21st Century Schools system will require that schools are active learning hubs providing access to resources, programmes and services for their whole communities. The system will demand that schools: build on the extended services (including childcare) that they are already providing to their communities; open up their facilities so that people in their communities can use them; provide more and wider opportunities for children, young people and their families to take part in sport, play, recreation, cultural and learning activities; and offer families easier access to other children's services within their local areas.

Schools will 'place an even stronger emphasis on working in partnership as, working in isolation, no one school will be able deliver the broad range of inputs and outcomes we want to see.'

Effective signposting will support schools to realise this important ambition.

Dawn Gilderoy

ContinYou
July 2009

Introduction to signposting

For most schools, clear, effective signposting to other services, either on site or elsewhere, is an integral part of achieving the aims of the Every Child Matters agenda.

A school offering extended services works with its local authority and other partners to offer access to a range of services and activities that support and motivate children, young people and families to achieve their full potential. Schools offer different activities or programmes, depending on the needs of their students, their families and local communities – and, by 2010, all schools will need to be offering access to this core range of extended services:

- a varied menu of study support activities, combined with childcare and play in primary schools
- a varied menu of activities and a safe place for secondary school students to be
- parenting support, including structured parenting programmes, family learning, and information about what is available, both locally and nationally
- swift and easy access to targeted and specialist services
- community access to school facilities, including places in which to run adult learning programmes.

Effective signposting directs service users who pass through schools to activities or services that are not provided on a school's site (or to services provided by other organisations on the school site). When the signposting is done well, it results in service users being confident about taking up the services they need at these alternative venues. People responsible for signposting in a school need to take reasonable steps to make sure that the services offered away from the school site are of good quality, and are appropriate and accessible.

To be sure of that quality, the services and activities to which the school signposts its users must have the appropriate policies and procedures in place – for example, policies which ensure that safeguarding, health and safety and insurance are properly addressed, and so on. Transport, childcare, literacy, language, cost, cultural needs, special educational needs and disabilities also need to be considered when assessing accessibility.

This 'go to' signposting tool can support a school to develop appropriate and effective ways of providing information about, and signposting, the services that are offered on its own site, across its locality and its extended school cluster, as well as nationally.

The general principles of signposting

These are the main attributes of effective signposting in a school:

- The language used is friendly, jargon-free and makes use of additional community languages.
- Communication with children and families with disabilities is appropriate – for example, signing services are in place for people who need it.
- Information is available on how to access services or activities – for example, the contact details of Help4me and websites such as HM Revenue & Customs' Working Tax Credit pages.
- Agreed information-sharing protocols are in place to handle information about individuals arising from signposting.
- The school makes a private area available for the discussion of sensitive information.
- Confidentiality is upheld at all times.
- Third parties involved in services or activities have recognised quality assurance schemes in place.

Signposting can be universal as well as targeted. Schools can use signposting to:

- get information to a broad group of people, unprompted (for example, at a parents' evening, or through leaflets in a reception area)
- direct people who are actively looking for services (for example, giving out details of a local childcare provider to someone looking for childcare)
- target services at specific groups of children or parents who may benefit from the services, even if they are not actively looking for them (for example, ESOL classes in a local college).

Signposting is effective when...

- the school reception staff understand and know how to respond to a request for information on extended services offered through the school. In the case of an automated switchboard, the options available to callers include extended services (although not necessarily using that term).
- a school that is signposting supports children, young people, their parents and carers to take up services.
- a school ensures that signposted services are available and appropriate.
- a school is aware of services available on its own site, across its locality and nationally.
- reasonable steps are taken to make sure services are of good quality.
- an appropriate disclaimer is issued alongside all written information related to signposted information or services.

Signposting is **better** when...

- a school's signposting practice shows an awareness of services that are available to all age ranges within its community – for example, infants, toddlers, early years children, middle years and teenagers.
- a school is aware of how signposted services are delivered – for example, through group work or on a one-to-one basis – and knows where the services are located.
- a school obtains feedback from parents and/or pupils that services have been accessed, that signposting has been appropriate, and that gaps have been identified and action taken to rectify these (local authorities, service providers and schools may play their part in rectifying gaps).
- there is an appropriately trained, named person in each school who is responsible for checking that information details are accurate and up to date.
- the school makes sure childcare and activities for the under- and over-8s delivered by third parties are registered with Ofsted.
- the school makes information on Working Tax Credits and other funding support for childcare available to parents and carers.
- parents are signposted to appropriate national services for support, such as Parentline Plus and Children's Legal Centre telephone helplines.

Signposting is **excellent** when...

- a school is aware of and offers (or brokers) support to overcome barriers related to transport, cost, literacy, cultural factors, special educational needs and disability, which some children, young people, their families and members of the community may face when accessing off-site provision.
- a school has input into its council's service development and delivery, which meets the particular needs of its locality, parents/carers, pupils and wider community.
- a school has the staff capacity to support parents in accessing services (in cases where a service to address an identified need has been agreed and is time-limited and specific) – and when local and wider information is available through the school's cluster to meet parents' needs and preferences.
- there is an appropriately trained, named person in each cluster who is responsible for checking that information details are accurate and current.
- the cluster has agreed a service-level agreement (SLA) that covers, for example: safeguarding, health and safety, appropriate insurance, equal opportunities, inclusion, disability and discrimination policies.

Signposting to a varied menu of activities

A school needs to offer access to a menu of study support activities. This can be offered by the school itself or by the school signposting to other schools or third-party providers, either within their cluster or another cluster.

Signposting to a varied menu of activities is **effective** when...

- information for children, young people and parents outlining programmes of activities is available through a school on a regular basis – for example, in a termly newsletter.
- a school ensures that information about activities or services adheres to its safeguarding policy and guidelines (for example, CRB checks are done and are in place for sports coaches).
- a school ensures that signposted activities and services are available and appropriate.
- a school takes heed of the charging policies and appropriate costs of activities and services to which it signposts users.

Signposting to a varied menu of activities is **better** when...

- a school makes information available to children, young people, parents and its wider community about programmes of activity that are accessible through the school, as well as through other partners – for example, through sports development bodies, the youth service, other school clusters.
- a school regularly reviews its signposted services to ensure they adhere to safeguarding policies and guidelines.
- the uptake of activities that are signposted to are shared with the school – for example, a mechanism is in place to gather feedback on attendance and achievements.
- a school uses appropriate funding to support young people to access activities off-site – for example, the Extended Services Disadvantage Subsidy.
- cluster co-ordinators ensure there is a consistent approach to signposting between schools in their cluster.

Signposting to a varied menu of activities is **excellent** when...

- information outlining activities available on the school site and through other partners is available in a variety of formats to children, young people, parents and the wider community – for example, on the school's website, on the local authority's Children and Young People (CYP) website, through leaflets and information sessions at parents' evenings, by enlisting young people as advocates.
- a member of a school's staff is trained to use the CYP directory and website to signpost families and young people to the activities they are interested in.
- a school regularly checks that signposted services adhere to safeguarding policies and guidelines.
- the information provided is available from a variety of sources.
- a school displays 'quality marks' in relation to activities that are signposted to, for example, sports club marks.
- a school obtains feedback from parents and pupils that services have been accessed, that signposting has been appropriate, or that gaps have been identified.
- a school recognises that activities provided off-site can contribute to school improvement; and where appropriate, the impact of activities provided off-site is shared with the school – for example, Playing for Success.
- a school allows young people to shape the varied menu of activities and service delivery, supporting them to utilise funding streams that young people can access and manage.
- a school signposts to a wide and varied range of quality, joint activities through the use of a cluster level agreement, which ensures adherence to policies and procedures.

Signposting to childcare or a 'safe place to be'

Schools can provide access to childcare or a safe place for pupils to spend time after school through clusters or through other providers, either on or off their sites. Schools can also signpost users to services and activities that are offered off-site through voluntary, private and independent providers or through childminder networks; or they can provide access through a combination of both on- and off-site provision.

Signposting to childcare or a 'safe place to be' is **effective** when...

- essential contact details are made available and given to parents – for example, the website address and telephone number for ChildcareLink, which offers national and local childcare information.
- a school updates information for parents regularly (for example, through a termly newsletter), and makes it readily available and accessible on noticeboards and in leaflet displays at reception and public areas within the school.
- a school is aware of and signposts parents to childcare services that are available town-wide and across its locality and provides information and support on how to access these services (for example, through the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit). These services can range from day, sessional, before and after-school provision to holiday provision.
- parents and carers are made aware, at the signposting point, of the free, minimum amount of early learning and care for all 3 and 4 year olds to which they are entitled.
- a school signposts users to a local children's centre, where appropriate.
- a secondary school offers access to a safe place, on its own site, where students can spend time before and after school – and when it also signposts students to other schools within its locality in order to ensure that provision is available from early until late during term time and holidays.

Signposting to childcare or a 'safe place to be' is **better** when...

- school staff are trained to enable them to access directories of information and to signpost available services – for example, when reception staff take part in non-accredited training.
- school staff are able to signpost and deliver some information on locally-based provision (within the town area) using the local authority's Children and Young People's Directory.
- a school signposts services or activities for all age ranges – from 0 to 19 (that is, infants, toddlers, early years, middle years, teens, including children with special needs and disabilities, children from minority ethnic groups).
- a school's staff have a broad knowledge of the childcare that is provided in its local authority and the school works in partnership with providers both on and off-site (for example, with voluntary services, private providers, childminder networks).
- a secondary school signposts students to safe places that are run and supervised by other services, for example, the youth service, the library service or local sports clubs.
- cluster arrangements and cluster co-ordinators act as mediators between schools and services to ensure quality is maintained.

Signposting to childcare or a 'safe place to be' is **excellent** when...

- a school's reception staff are trained in information, advice and guidance and can access the Family Information Service (FIS) to signpost users to available services.
- the Family Information Service incorporates details of the local authority's childcare sufficiency audit into their database, which adds value to signposted information.
- cluster co-ordinators provide school staff with information that enables them to distinguish between levels of advice and support required, so that signposting to quality-assured provision is more effective.
- a school is aware of transport, cost, literacy, cultural, special educational needs and disability barriers that some children, young people and their families face when accessing off-site provision and offers support to overcome such barriers.
- a school obtains feedback from parents and pupils that services have been accessed, that signposting has been appropriate, or identifies gaps and feeds these back to providers.
- cluster co-ordinators support all schools in a cluster to keep information correct and up to date.
- cluster co-ordinators liaise with the early years lead person in the local authority in order to identify quality childcare provision to which schools can signpost users.
- cluster co-ordinators, in partnership with FIS teams, provide a termly directory of services that offer secondary school students a safe place to go before and after school, both during term and holiday times.
- a school's directory also includes its varied menu of activities and this is published on its website.

Signposting to parenting support

Access to parenting support can be offered directly by a school, or by signposting parents to services offered by other schools (including by other clusters of schools) or by third-party providers in the voluntary, community or private sectors, or in the local authority.

Signposting to parenting support is **effective** when...

- information for parents is available through a school on a regular basis – for example, when leaflets or notice boards are visible to parents; this might be in a school's reception area or outside in the playground.
- a school uses a local service directory to signpost parents to local and national parenting information; and staff signpost parents to services available through the local Family Information Service (FIS), which holds accurate, up-to-date information about all Ofsted-registered childcare (including childminders, nurseries, pre-schools, out-of-school clubs and holiday play schemes).
- a school holds regular parents' evenings.
- specific needs of parents are identified.
- a school prospectus is available to parents in a format they can easily access.

Signposting to parenting support is **better** when...

- information for parents is available outlining programmes of activities and services offered through the school and other partners – for example, at children's centres or through family learning programmes.
- school staff are trained to access directories of information and to signpost parents to services that are available – for example, reception staff take part in non-accredited training.
- parents' evenings are used to signpost to parenting support – for example, universal, targeted and specialist support and services.
- parents are signposted to specific, targeted programmes that meet the needs that have emerged through needs audits – for example, baby massage at a children's centre or support for parents of teenagers.
- a school prospectus is available to parents in a format they can easily access and includes information on support available.

Signposting to parenting support is **excellent** when...

- information to parents about activities and services that are available on a school site and through other partners is available in a variety of formats – for example, on the school's website, or on the local authority's Children and Young People website (CYP), through leaflets, and through parents acting as advocates.
- reception staff are trained in giving information, advice and guidance.
- a school's staff are trained in core parenting skills, which can support them to signpost effectively.
- parents are able to feed back to the school on their experience of the signposting process and service.
- services offered by the school are present at parents' evenings (including services offered by third-sector partners).
- a school has mechanisms in place to capture the impact of signposted interventions.
- a school prospectus is available to parents in a format they can easily access and includes information on support available to them, and when individual support is given to the most vulnerable service users, for example, pupils and parents needing signing services.
- mechanisms are in place to capture and analyse the uptake of support – for example, through active parents' groups, forums and service providers.
- when cluster co-ordinators provide information booklets or web-based information on parenting support and family learning – and local and national information sessions are available to all schools within a cluster.

Signposting to 'swift and easy access' to services

'Swift and easy access' signposting means that a school offers access to other statutory services for children and families and to voluntary and community organisations that focus on early identification and support for children and young people with additional needs, or who are at risk of poor outcomes. This signposting includes pointing out access to support for children and young people with behavioural, emotional and other difficulties.

Swift and easy access signposting is **effective** when...

- a school has an adequate knowledge of services within its local authority to support children and parents who require a variety of help and support.
- a school provides information to parents and pupils about services available to meet an agreed list of needs.
- a school is able to access services to meet parents' and children's identified needs within an acceptable time frame that is agreed with parents and children; when details of these services are readily available to parents in a clear, accessible format; and when a school has a working knowledge of services available locally and town-wide.
- parents and pupils have an awareness of the common assessment framework (CAF), know who to ask if they want a CAF assessment and are confident in the school's ability to support them through the process.

Swift and easy access signposting is **better** when...

- a school has a good working knowledge of services available, held by two or more members of staff who are available and meet with parents when they need it.
- a school has a virtual directory of services available, which is accessible to parents in a format that encourages its use – for example, a virtual information board, a downloadable file.
- a school has two or more members of staff who can provide clear signposting to services for parents in a format that is acceptable and supportive – that is, in a format they will use (for example, a school needs to be aware that parents may need peer support to access services or help when literacy skills are a barrier).
- a school offers parents a private area in which to discuss their signposting needs.
- a school has a good knowledge of services available locally and town-wide, and staff are regularly trained and updated about services available to parents.
- a school has staff who are trained to use the common assessment framework (CAF) and parents are confident in their ability to support them through the CAF process. Parental agreement to instigate the CAF process would demonstrate this.

Swift and easy access signposting is **excellent** when...

- parents know their children's school provides access to a wide variety of services that can meet their individual needs and that any gaps in services – for example, ESOL services, SEN and disability needs services, confidence-building programmes – are identified and addressed.
- a school provides drop-in or awareness-raising opportunities at which town-wide services can offer information about their local services – for example, information sessions on speech and language therapy, CAHMS.
- pupils' 'did not attend' (DNA) figures drop as a result of services.
- a school has a trained, named member of staff who is responsible for updating its database of service provision and who links with other schools in the locality to update or ratify service provision.
- some feedback is obtained from parents and/or pupils that services have been accessed, that signposting has been appropriate or that gaps have been identified and needs addressed.
- a school has input into its council's service development and delivery, which meets particular needs of its locality/parents/carers and pupils – for example, through locality forums.
- a school has the staff capacity to support parents to access services in cases where a service to address an identified need has been agreed and is time-limited and specific.
- there is a cluster approach to signposting families and members of the school's local community to statutory, voluntary and community services.
- special schools and Pupil Referral Units are fully included in the network of extended provision.

Signposting to services in the community

Where schools don't have suitable facilities such as playing fields or IT suites for use by their wider communities, they should signpost people to facilities at other schools, or to other community facilities in their areas. Schools can offer access to school-based adult learning programmes or offer these through a cluster of schools or through local providers.

Signposting to community access is **effective** when...

- community use of school buildings and off-site facilities is appropriate and meets the needs that have been identified, and when information for children, young people and parents about off-site facilities is available through a school on a regular basis (for example, through a termly newsletter).
- a school provides information about appropriate adult learning opportunities available in its local area, for example, through the Adult and Community Learning directory, colleges or children's centres.
- a school adopts any town-wide charging policy to ensure consistency and to make facilities more affordable.
- a school ensures that signposted buildings and other facilities are available and appropriate.

Signposting to community access is **better** when...

- a school makes information about off-site buildings and other facilities available to children, young people, parents and its wider community in a variety of formats – for example, online, through the school's website, through leaflets, and information sessions on services presented at parents' evenings, or when young people are enlisted as advocates for such facilities.
- a school determines whether consultation has taken place; if not it will consult with its local community to determine what adult learning opportunities are needed.
- a school provides information about appropriate adult learning opportunities that are available in its local area, for example, through the Adult and Community Learning directory, colleges or children's centres.
- a school uses appropriate funding to support people's access to off-site community activities.
- a school shares the facilities and buildings to which it signposts its community users.

Signposting to community access is **excellent** when...

- a school maintains regular contact with off-site providers to ensure that facilities are appropriate.
- a school obtains feedback from parents and pupils that facilities have been accessed and that the school's signposting has been appropriate, that gaps have been identified and that people's needs have been addressed.
- a school has completed a needs analysis with its community and uses this to signpost to appropriate services and activities; when transport, childcare, literacy, language, cost, cultural, special educational needs and disabilities are all considered.
- a school allows groups within its community (for example, local resident groups) to shape service delivery, and supports them to utilise funding streams.
- a school obtains feedback from parents and pupils that buildings and other facilities have been accessed and that the school's signposting has been appropriate, and that gaps have been identified.
- cluster co-ordinators have an overview and understanding of the audit of provision and their communities' needs, which enables them to help the schools within their clusters to signpost more effectively to quality provision.