



Department
for Education



**Top tips for running a
successful Summer School**

The Department for Education's Summer Schools programme provides funding for schools to help disadvantaged pupils (those eligible for free school meals and those looked after continuously for more than six months by the local authority) to make a successful transition to Year 7. NFER and Ecorys evaluated the Summer Schools programme in its first year through a survey completed by 877 schools; and case study visits to 10 schools on two occasions, involving interviews with staff, pupils and parents/carers. Here are the top tips identified in the study.

Designing and planning a Summer School

1. Identify your disadvantaged pupils

- ✓ Access the Key to Success website www.keytosuccess.education.gov.uk/schools and identify which of the incoming Year 7 pupils are eligible for the Summer School.
- ✓ Ask parents/carers to identify whether their child is entitled to Free School Meals and ask if they have any specific needs or concerns.
- ✓ Make early contact with feeder primary school staff so that they can help identify disadvantaged pupils and market the Summer School to families.
- ✓ If you have a small number of disadvantaged pupils moving into Year 7, consider working with other local schools to deliver a joint Summer School or share activities.
- ✓ Contact the Virtual Looked After Children Head in your authority as they will be able to identify disadvantaged pupils and advise on their needs. For details, see: www.education.gov.uk/a00208592/virtual-school-head

2. Set and review your aims and objectives

- ✓ Set clear aims and objectives for your Summer School, so that there is a shared understanding about what your school wants to achieve. Check that your aims are aligned with those for the programme: www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/premium/summer/a00216636/summerschoolsprogramme
- ✓ Ensure you have processes in place to measure the impact the Summer School has in achieving personal, social and educational objectives. This could include standardised testing, checking progress in lessons, and collecting feedback from pupils and their parents/carers. For guidance on evaluation, see: [http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/uploads/pdf/EEF_DIY_Evaluation_Guide_\(2013\).pdf](http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/uploads/pdf/EEF_DIY_Evaluation_Guide_(2013).pdf)

3. Review your funding arrangements

- ✓ Ensure the school bursar and/or business manager knows the funding arrangements for the Summer School.
- ✓ Review the availability of additional resources that might be levered-in to make the Summer School funding go further. This might include other school funding, donations from local businesses, volunteer time or in-kind support.

- ✓ Ensure that school governors are made aware of how the Summer School funding is being spent and how this will impact on pupil outcomes so that they can monitor progress.

4. Decide upon an appropriate length and structure

- ✓ Take a 'long term view' of the Summer School as part of the wider experience of transition for pupils, and think about integrating Summer School strategies and activities within teaching and learning in Year 7.
- ✓ Give careful consideration to timing and duration, plan around the availability of pupils and staff over the summer holiday period, and ensure that there is sufficient time to cover what you aim to achieve.
- ✓ Consider whether breaking the Summer School up into shorter chunks would work for your pupils. For example, would 2–3 days a week over a number of weeks work better than a block period?

5. Ensure the availability of staff

- ✓ If possible, involve a wide range of staff from the school, so that pupils get to know a range of teachers and support staff. Also include members of the Year 7 teaching team, to provide continuity for the pupils and enable staff to become familiar with the needs of the new intake.
- ✓ Make teaching staff available to plan activities jointly and if the Summer School is being subcontracted to an external agency ensure the approach is fully joined-up.

6. Design a high quality programme of activities

- ✓ Check the availability of buildings or equipment well in advance – both internally to the school and for any trips or residential activities, so that these can be booked during the busy holiday period. This might also include opening the school canteen, so that pupils can get a feel for the Year 7 experience.

- ✓ Involve parents/carers and disadvantaged pupils in designing promotional material and Summer School activities. This will ensure they have some ownership of the programme and that it meets their needs.

- ✓ Make a list of the expertise and resources that are needed to deliver the Summer School, to establish what can be provided 'in house' by the school and what might need to be sourced externally (e.g. specialist arts/sports).

- ✓ Consider working in partnership with external providers, where they can offer added value. Ensure that activities are planned jointly with school staff to form a coherent programme.

7. Set in place appropriate support for pupils

- ✓ Review the learning and pastoral support needs within the new Year 7 cohort, and plan the type and level of classroom support accordingly.
- ✓ Consider whether pupils have any specific travel requirements, particularly if they are travelling far or if they are the only pupil making that journey, and offer support accordingly (e.g. travel maps, bus pickups).

8. Publicise and recruit pupils to the Summer School

- ✓ Use school open evenings to promote the Summer School and encourage parents/carers whose children are eligible for Free School Meals, but have not registered, to do so.
- ✓ Consider whether a written invitation is the most appropriate way of communicating with parents/carers and give a deadline for parents/carers to confirm their child's attendance.
- ✓ For schools that have already run a Summer School use 'alumni' as advocates for the programme.
- ✓ Consider providing incentives for participation, such as team points or discount schemes that are redeemable for school uniform or PE kit.
- ✓ Contact local businesses to see if they will donate prizes for pupils.



Ensure you have processes in place to measure the impact the Summer School has in achieving personal, social and educational objectives.



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Running

a Summer School

1. Deliver an inspiring mix of activities

- ✓ Include a combination of activities such as 'fun' sports and arts, together with curricular themed activities delivered in a creative way. Plan to include something different or innovative to attract pupils to attend.
- ✓ Ensure that the Summer School places a sufficient focus on literacy and numeracy development for disadvantaged pupils, who are at greater risk of 'summer learning loss'. This might include the use of embedded literacy or numeracy, delivered via practical activities such as drama or quizzes.
- ✓ Provide targeted support to disadvantaged pupils (especially if your Summer School is open to other pupils as well) including individual target-setting and mentoring. Ensure that there is sufficient learner support to differentiate the sessions and cater for a range of academic abilities.

2. Make use of different locations and spaces

- ✓ Provide opportunities for pupils to familiarise themselves with the school buildings and environment. For example, a treasure hunt can be a fun activity and help pupils to become oriented to their new surroundings.
- ✓ Consider the merits of running some activities off-site, to give disadvantaged pupils new experiences and to challenge and inspire them.
- ✓ Include activities that help pupils get used to learning independently.

3. Address the social and emotional aspects of transition

- ✓ Address any fears pupils might have around bullying by providing specific activities and support, including details of strategies the school has to counteract bullying and what pupils should do if it happens to them.
- ✓ Find time within the programme of Summer School activities to openly discuss topics that might be causing pupils concern, such as bullying or making new friends. Clearly explain the practical support that is in place.
- ✓ Consider involving older pupils to support the pupils moving into Year 7. New pupils get to meet the 'big' pupils in Year 11 and/or the sixth form and the older pupils get a positive reference on their CV.

4. Promote parental engagement

- ✓ Consider the merits of running some activities to engage parents/carers in the delivery of the Summer Schools. Activities such as cookery classes or family learning can be a fun way for parents/carers and pupils to participate.
- ✓ Involve parents/carers as volunteers, e.g. by engaging parents/carers with English as an Additional Language (EAL) to deliver cultural or language themed activities within the Summer School.

5. Celebrate success

- ✓ Organise a celebration event and invite the pupils', parents and carers to engage them and allow them to celebrate their child's success. Consider the use of awards or certificates, so that pupils have a lasting memento.
- ✓ Get pupils to hand in any work they produce so that teachers can assess it and establish where pupils have particular strengths and weaknesses. Consider using more formal assessment (e.g. pre/post tests) if appropriate.
- ✓ Consider the value of providing home learning activities for pupils to complete over the summer holidays if they wish to.

Embedding

Summer School activities

- ✓ Find opportunities to make the link with pupils' learning at home, through worksheets, activities or reading for the duration of the summer holidays.
- ✓ Ensure that any valuable insights into pupils' needs gained through the Summer School are used to plan ahead for Year 7. This might include setting in place additional individualised support, running additional catch-up classes, or raising safeguarding concerns through the appropriate channels.
- ✓ Review the Summer School by bringing together the staff involved to assess what they have learnt and what worked well/less well. Use this information to improve future planning.
- ✓ Share the Summer School learning and the impact information you have collected with other staff, perhaps through a short staff meeting. Update school governors so they know what the school has done.
- ✓ Consider any transferable learning for other areas of the school, including the wider Year 7 transition programme, curricula, and learner support.



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This guide was prepared by Laurie Day, Kerry Martin, Caroline Sharp, Rachel Gardner and Jo Barham.

For more information about the evaluation findings please see:

Day, L., Martin, K., Sharp, S., Gardner, R. and Barham, J. (2013). *Summer Schools Programme for Disadvantaged Pupils: Key Findings for Schools*. Department for Education [online]. Available: <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-RR271B>

Martin, K., Sharp, C., Day, L., S., Gardner, R., Mehta, P. and Cook, R. (2013). *Evaluation of the Summer Schools Programme for Disadvantaged Pupils: Overview Report*. Department for Education [online]. Available: <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-RR271A>