

opening School Facilities - end of programme report



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Opening Schools Facilities (OSF) was a Department for Education (DfE) funding programme to support the goals of the School Sport and Activity Action Plan. The three-year investment aimed to find local solutions for long term changes in behaviour, leading to more people being active in areas that needed it most.

OSF aimed to support schools to open their facilities outside of the normal school day to allow children and young people and the wider community to access more opportunities to be physically active.

The programme aimed to tackle inequalities, specifically focused on the following priority groups:

- Girls and women
- Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- People experiencing social disadvantage (defined in OSF as Free school meals (FSM) and eligibility for pupils and families)
- Children and families from ethnically diverse communities (EDC)

Activities were based on youth voice, with the aim of engaging both the school and wider communities and developing a sustainable workforce.

The aims of OSF aligned with

MAKING OUR MOVE

our shared vision for Uniting the Movement in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, and the shared aim of enabling children and young people (CYP) to have positive experiences of being active throughout their childhood.



How were schools identified?

Schools were approached in line with the DfE guidance around tackling inequalities. Their Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) scores, free school meal (FSM) and special educational needs (SEND) data were all taken into consideration. Key partners from education and health, along with the Active Notts and Active Derbyshire place team, all shared insight into schools based on lived experience and previous work.



Year 1: January 2023 – March 2023

A total of **39** schools became part of the OSF programme, with **£540,062.70** of funding being allocated, an average of **£13,848** per school.

With the national announcement to launch the OSF programme taking place in January, Year 1 consisted of 3 months. Schools had to react to these timescales to create their plans, informed by youth voice. In the first-year funding was primarily allocated for equipment, storage and staff training, this was to enable activities to be delivered in the second year. There were no activities delivered within the first year.

Most schools applied for funding for one activity in the first year.

TIMESCALES

Year 3: April 2024 – March 2025

Twelve new schools joined the programme in year 3 taking the total to **67** schools. There was **£870,000** of funding available to these schools. At the end of the third year **£794,547** was claimed by the schools to deliver the activities detailed in their plans, which was an average of **£11,684** per school.

There were **174** activities funded in the third year.

2990 sessions delivered

CYP 4652 individual users

and **44,076** throughput

Community users **814** individual users

and **6,110** throughput

EDC 2982 FSM 3710 SEND 2655 GIRLS 4126

Year 2: April 2023 – March 2024

Sixteen new schools joined the programme in the second year, taking the total to **55** schools across Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. Between them **£815,387.98** of funding was allocated, an average of **£14,825** per school.

In the second year, funding was spent on a variety of resources, including equipment and storage. It also paid for continuous professional development (CPD) for staff and some young leader courses. Community clubs, staffing costs and external coaching expenses were also included. In the second year, pool hire, lifeguard costs and transport to swimming were regularly included in delivery plans.

There were **126** activities funded in the second year of OSF

2451 sessions delivered

CYP 6451 individual users and **37,064** throughput

Community users **428** individual users and **3,080** throughput

EDC 3847 FSM 5696 SEND 3081 GIRLS 6286

Figures shown above are taken from the monthly participation data that was submitted by schools.



Overall data – January 2023–March 2025

340 activities funded across the three years.

Total funding committed over three years **£2,149,996**





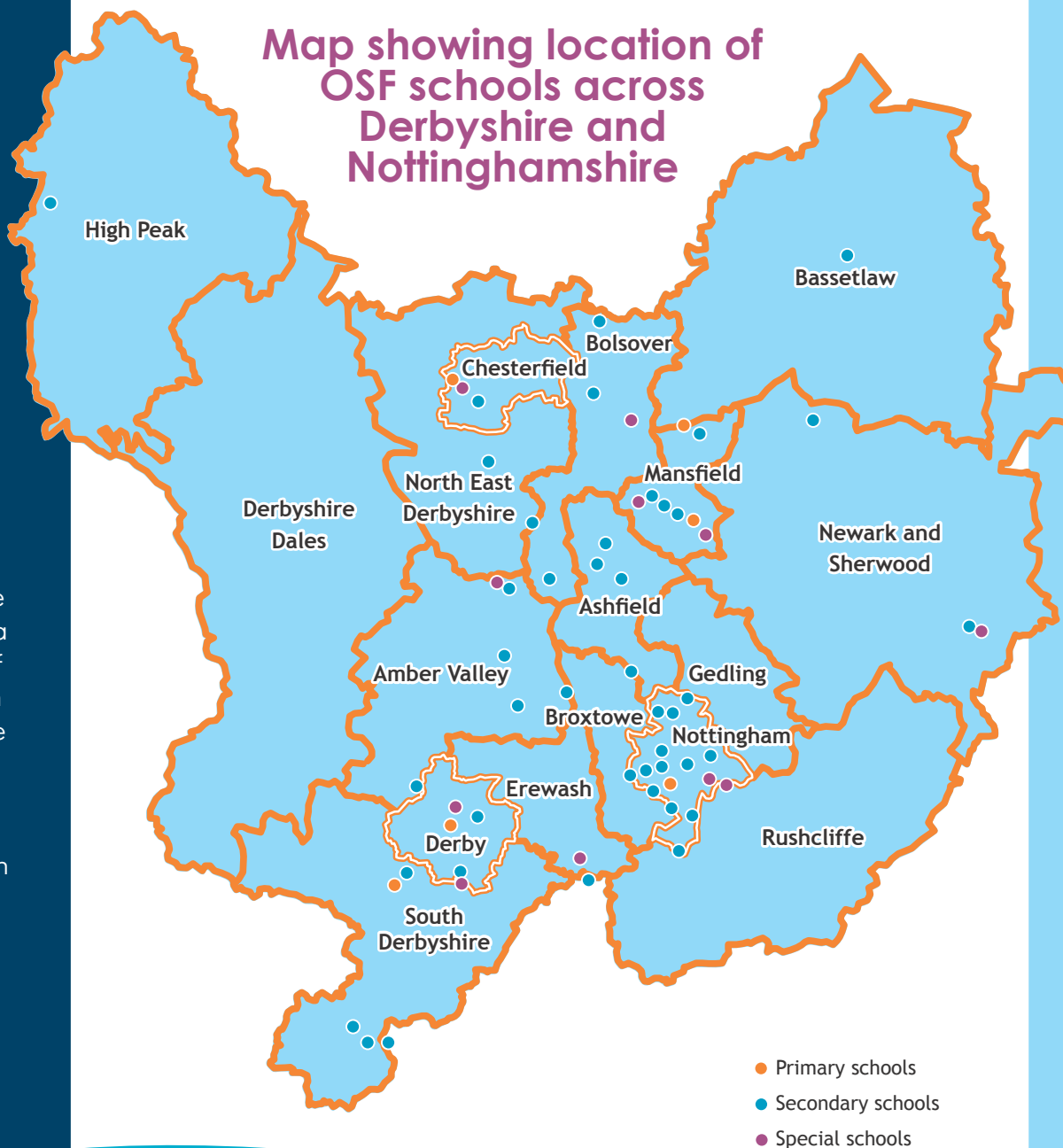
School commitment:

Schools were required to commit to the programme for up to three years, until March 2025.

Schools receiving funding were asked to deliver a minimum of a 12 week programme for each of their chosen activities, for each year of their funding. They were also required to be part of the national evaluation which included collecting participation data from children and young people and the community sessions.

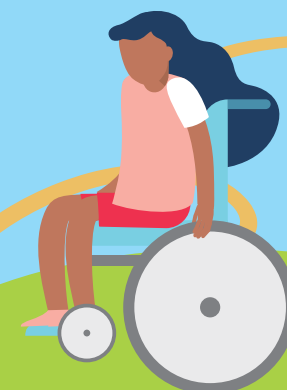
All the activities that were created and delivered were to be new or additional to what was already taking place in the school.

Map showing location of OSF schools across Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire



What could the funding be used for?

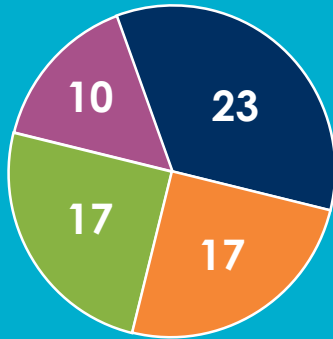
- To support schools to open to the community
- To help schools with pools to safely re-open
- To purchase additional sports, activity and storage equipment
- To improve accessibility of school sports facilities for pupils with SEND
- To cover additional short-term staffing challenges
- CPD for staff and young people



Headlines - Year 3 (April 2024 - March 2025)

A total of **67** schools applied for funding in Year 3, including **4** primary schools, **53** secondary schools and **10** special schools.

- Derbyshire: **23 schools** (34%)
- Nottinghamshire: **17 schools** (25%)
- Nottingham City: **17 schools** (25%)
- Derby City: **10 schools** (15%)



Overall **£794,547** was allocated to schools in the third year.

Some schools were unable to use all of their funding allocation in the third and final year, creating an underspend. This was mainly because of the lack of capacity within schools.

Funding was spent on a wide variety of resources, including equipment and storage, CPD for staff and young leader courses, community clubs, short-term staffing costs, external coaching costs, pool hire, lifeguards and transport for swimming.

DfE key performance indicators in Year 3

For Year 3 of the programme, we were given targets from the DfE to engage 7,140 young people and 2,380 community users in sport and physical activity on 67 school sites.

Year 3 overall outcomes

In Year 3 of the programme, **67 schools** delivered a total of **4,187 physical activity sessions** for **11,245 young people** and **987 community users**. We know this because of the monthly participation data that schools have submitted for their activities.

Of the 67 schools involved in the programme; **99%** fall in a 1-5 score based on Pupil IDACI and **74%** fall in a 1-5 score based on School IDACI, therefore prioritising those in disadvantaged areas.

As part of the programme, there has been continued emphasis on swimming and water safety, to increase the number of children and young people able to swim 25m. 21 schools in Year 3 chose swimming as an activity, with many including family swimming sessions as part of their offer during the school holidays.

Year 3 Activities

A total of 174 activities took place in Year 3, all of which were informed through youth voice. The most popular activities chosen were multi-sport, fitness, swimming and football. 35 different activities were chosen across the schools, with newer additions including Padel Tennis, Mental Health & Wellbeing sessions, and Outdoor Adventure activities.

Students with SEND remained the most chosen priority group for activities, followed by Girls and those on Free School Meals. There was increased focus on Ethnically Diverse Communities in Year 3, with 45% of schools specifically working with this group compared to lower engagement in previous years.



Programme Impact and Legacy

As the three-year OSF programme concludes, the impact has been significant across all participating schools. The programme has successfully:

- **Established** sustainable physical activity programmes in 67 schools
- **Created** lasting partnerships between schools and community organisations
- **Developed** a trained workforce of teachers and young leaders
- **Improved** facilities and equipment that will benefit students for years to come
- **Demonstrated** clear pathways for continued community engagement

Many schools have committed to continuing their programmes using alternative funding sources and the infrastructure developed through OSF.

Case Studies

At the end of the third and final year, we have gathered additional case studies to showcase the long-term impact and sustainability of the programme.

Brackenfield Special School continues to build on their success from Years 1 and 2, now operating as a hub for SEND activity provision in their local area, supporting other schools in developing inclusive programmes.

St Andrew's Academy has established formal partnerships with three local sports clubs, creating clear progression pathways for their students and opening their facilities to the wider community on a regular basis.

Hall Park Academy has developed an offer to encourage girls to become more physically active. The school has spoken to the girls about what the offer should look like before they were invited to become part of the programme.

Feedback gained from Young People participating in OSF activities

"These sessions have become the highlight of my week. I've made new friends and gained confidence I never had before."

"I love that we get to try sports we've never done before. It's opened my eyes to so many possibilities."

"The coaches really understand us and make everyone feel included, no matter what your ability level is."

"I wish we could have even more sessions and maybe some weekend opportunities too."

"The equipment is brilliant now, and having our own space makes such a difference."

Feedback gained from OSF Project Leads

"The three-year programme has fundamentally changed how we view community engagement. We now have sustainable programmes that will continue beyond the funding period."

"OSF has allowed us to create lasting partnerships with local clubs and organisations. Our students now have clear pathways into community sport."

"The impact on our students' wellbeing has been remarkable. We've seen improved attendance and engagement across the whole school community."

"The young people engaging in the sessions are just fabulous, it has a mix of young people and abilities and the interaction between them has been brilliant."

"Children with special needs and their families have access to things they wouldn't have previously, and some swimmers will be able to access curriculum swimming as the barriers have now been broken down."



Reflections and Learnings:

Opening School Facilities Programme



The Opening School Facilities (OSF) programme provided valuable insights into the barriers schools and young people face regarding physical activity participation. This review examines the programme's successes, challenges, and key learnings to inform future initiatives.

Programme Successes

Strategic Approach

- **Funding Strategy:** The decision not to set specific funding amounts encouraged creative proposals and innovative thinking from schools
- **Targeted Outreach:** A personalised, targeted approach to schools proved more effective than broad, generic communications
- **Evidence-Based Decisions:** Gathering preliminary insights enabled more informed decision-making throughout the programme
- **Selective Communication:** Limiting wider communications rather than broadcasting to all schools improved engagement quality
- **Place-based work:** The schools that were part of the OSF programme were selected based on data, and insight from those working in place. The activities that were funded as part of the programme were in response to what the young people and communities were saying they needed. The Active Notts and Active Derbyshire place team worked closely with the OSF leads throughout the programme and relationships with local schools were established or strengthened as a result. This has led to increased engagement from schools in subsequent local and county opportunities

Relationship Building

- **Partnership Focus:** Prioritising relationship development over transactional interactions supported stronger outcomes
- **Key Partners:** School Games Organisers were crucial facilitators to school engagement
- **Peer Networks:** Special schools effectively introduced each other to the programme, creating organic expansion and sharing insight along the way
- **Resource Connections:** Schools were successfully linked with additional partners including the Move More Derby team, National Governing Bodies, and the School Games Organisers

Broader Impact

- **Institutional Support:** Strong backing from the National Team and consortium partners strengthened programme delivery
- **New Partnerships:** Programme activities opened doors to local authorities, including establishing a new relationship with Nottingham's Director of Education
- **Data Collection:** Improved Active Lives Survey completion rates among participating schools which hopefully will be ongoing
- **Ongoing Relationships:** Built connections that extended beyond the programme, with schools accessing additional team support, for instance connecting with our Place Team and/or the Funding Lead



Programme Challenges

Structural Issues

- **Timing Misalignment:** Funding timeframes didn't align with the academic years, creating implementation difficulties
- **Response Delays:** Initial waiting periods when approaching schools in priority order slowed programme rollout
- **Staff Turnover:** Personnel changes in schools frequently caused programme delays and disrupted continuity

Implementation Barriers

- **Secondary School Challenges:** Limited experience with school swimming programmes created difficulties with pool booking and timetabling
- **Resource Constraints:** Additional workload meant some programmes weren't delivered as originally planned
- **Community Engagement:** Schools struggled to implement the community-facing elements of the programme
- **Staffing Issues:** Difficulty recruiting coaches and activity leaders hindered programme delivery

Key Learnings

Programme Design Insights

- **Credibility Concerns:** Some schools initially viewed the offer as "too good to be true," suggesting need for clearer communication about programme legitimacy
- **Contact Strategy:** Having multiple named contacts within each school helped distribute workload and strengthen institutional relationships
- **Funding Approach:** Balance required between withholding funding pending data provision and maintaining positive school relationships

Resource Allocation

- **Staffing Support:** Funding additional dedicated staff would have been more effective than adding responsibilities to existing teachers' workloads
- **Targeted Impact:** Focused, tailored projects delivered greater impact than broad-brush approaches

Recommendations for Future Programmes

Based on these learnings, future initiatives should consider:

- Aligning funding cycles with academic calendars
- Developing clearer communication strategies to establish programme credibility
- Investing in dedicated staffing rather than relying solely on existing school personnel
- Maintaining focus on targeted, personalised approaches over generic solutions
- Building in contingency plans for staff turnover and institutional changes



Opening School Facilities Programme Delivered by:



Opening School Facilities Programme Funded by:

