



Out-of-school-hours learning (oshl) Mini guide for parents

What is out-of-school-hours learning (oshl)?

Out-of-school-hours learning (oshl) is any activity that young people take part in voluntarily, outside normal school hours. Oshl is:

- **for young people** – anyone of school age (aged 4 to 19)
- **voluntary** – young people choose to take part
- **activities** – from gardening and drama clubs to sailing and dancing
- **outside normal school hours** – before the start of the school day, at lunch times, after school, at weekends or during the school holidays.

Oshl activities may be as diverse as nail art, powerboat sailing, climbing, gardening, maths clubs and drama productions. Many parents will remember these kinds of activities from their own school days as extra-curricular activities.

About this guide

This mini guide has been written for parents/carers to summarise the full importance of all out-of-school-hours learning (oshl), in helping children reach their full potential in all aspects of their development. For further information about oshl, visit www.continyou.org.uk/oshl.

Why should my child take part in oshl activities?

Out-of-school-hours learning can open up opportunities that, in many cases, quite literally change lives. While the prime purpose of oshl is to enable young people to follow a specific interest or to fulfil a particular need, an important outcome is the improvement in their motivation and self-esteem, and their ability to become more effective, lifelong learners.

What are the benefits of oshl?

Research* has shown that children who take part in oshl activities:

- have greater self-esteem
- show a more positive attitude towards learning
- attend school more regularly
- behave better
- have opportunities to develop relationships with pupils and adults beyond their usual circle
- have higher attainment than similar groups that do not take part.



'I am glad my children take part in extra-curricular activities.

As well as learning a massive range of skills that are not normally taught in school, such as climbing, Forest School and gymnastics, I have noticed how much these extra-curricular activities have improved their self-esteem. They also get to meet children from the wider area in which we live, which is great for the community as a whole, as it really pulls everyone together.

Henni Tremlett – Parent

*Source: John MacBeath et al (2001) *The impact of study support: a report of a longitudinal study into the impact of participation in out-of-school-hours learning on the academic attainment, attitudes and school attendance of secondary school students*, DfES – available online at www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/studysupport/docs/impact

How will my family benefit?

Encouraging families to learn together

Many out-of-school clubs and activities are open to younger/older siblings, as well as to parents/families and the wider community, as part of a community focused approach.

Bringing new skills and learning back into the home

Even when families are not directly involved in oshl, family learning can still take place as the experiences and learning gained by the young people are taken back into the home. One example of this is ideas for tasty dishes being brought home from cookery clubs.

'Our family as a whole benefits from what the kids learn in their after-school-hours activities – some of them more unusual than others. Our eldest son recently taught the rest of the family how to whittle a useful wooden item from a piece of fallen wood!'

Ian Findlay – Parent

Sunshine Breakfast Club, Craig yr Hesg Primary School

The Sunshine Breakfast Club at Craig yr Hesg Primary School in Rhondda Cynon Taff (winners of the 2009 Kellogg's Breakfast Club Award) was conceived as a way of raising the local community's health through learning about nutrition and healthy cooking. It provides a welcome opportunity for parents and children to learn together while sharing a healthy breakfast.



Budding Cooks Club, Ogmore Vale Primary School

Recently, with the help of Community Focused Schools funds, activities at the school have been extended beyond the school day with the introduction of the 'Budding Cooks Club'. This is a weekly after-school cooking and gardening club for Years 3 and 4.

A parent of one of the pupils recently commented that, prior to the Keeping Healthy initiatives, her child had refused to make many healthy choices. However, her child now eats, and thoroughly enjoys, a range of vegetables and fruit. The fruit kebabs are working a treat!



Opening up opportunities not possible within the family unit

Some specific oshl activities offer young people valuable opportunities that may not be possible within the family unit for financial, logistical or other reasons. Examples include days out, sporting and cultural opportunities, and residential trips overseas and within Wales.

For example, the Urdd provides children from non-Welsh speaking households with the chance to take part in oshl activities through the medium of Welsh.

'In addition to overseas visits to France, Spain and even Patagonia, the Urdd offers countless opportunities for oshl at residential centres at Glan-llyn, Llangrannog and at the WMC (Wales Millennium Centre) in Cardiff. The network of community Adrannau and Aelwydydd also gives children and young people opportunities to learn outside school hours, as does preparing for the Urdd Eisteddfod.'

Siân Eleri, Director for Communication, Urdd Gobaith Cymru

Celebration, recognition and qualifications – the rewards of oshl

There are lots of ways your child's participation in oshl activities might be recognised and celebrated – through a certificate or letter, a civic award, a trip, a party, a newspaper article, a mention in school assembly, inclusion in progress files or a family celebration at home.

For a more formal approach, the Children and Young People's University Cymru offers a structured means of recognising out-of-school-hours learning for registered schools and organisations. For further details, visit www.childrensuniversitywales.org.

Some oshl activities can lead to an award or certificate, for example, the Welsh Baccalaureate. For more information on how your child's participation in oshl activities can be accredited formally, please visit www.continyou.org.uk/wales.

When it comes to writing a personal statement for college or university, most young people are glad to be able to talk about the activities and clubs they have been involved in and the useful experiences gained.

'At first I wasn't sure what to write about in my personal statement for my university application, but then I started thinking about all the things I had done like school trips I had been on, playing netball, helping at my local youth club and taking part in a community drama, which didn't seem that important at the time – they were just what I did after school. I wrote about them all in my statement and now I am looking forward to starting university in September.'
Sixth former

Easing the move from primary to secondary school

When primary and secondary schools collaborate in setting up oshl programmes, this can play an important part in helping to ease the transition between schools for both children and parents/carers, enabling them to become familiar with the new school, school staff and, often, other pupils, so allaying many of the fears about transition. Similarly, joint oshl activities can help ease other transitions, such as from infant to junior school, and from secondary school to sixth form or further education colleges.

Dragon Sports and 5 x 60

These two Sports Wales initiatives are working in schools and other settings across Wales to get young people more active. For more information about the work of Sports Wales, visit www.sports-council-wales.org.uk.

Dragon Sports offers 7 to 11 year olds enjoyable sporting opportunities in an out-of-school-hours setting. It introduces primary school aged children to inclusive games skills development and competition, using versions of adult games modified to meet their needs and skill levels. For more information, visit www.dragonsport.co.uk.

The 5 x 60 initiative aims to get secondary school pupils to take part in 60 minutes of physical activity five times a week. From street dancing to netball, cheerleading to rugby, 5 x 60 officers are working in schools across Wales to transform young people's attitudes to being physically active. For more information, visit www.5x60.org.uk.



Nail Art Club, Rhyl High School

Following consultation with female pupils from Rhyl High School, the need for an after-school session that didn't focus on sport or leisure was identified. The result was a new nail art club, running each week for 1.5 hours after school.

The sessions were led by a youth worker skilled in this area, and the girls loved comparing patterns and colours each week – and even tried out false nails under close supervision. All the girls who took part respected that nail art was purely for out-of-school use, but oh such fun!



Frequently asked questions

Is there a difference between out-of-school-hours learning and after-school clubs?

Yes. The main difference is the primary purpose behind the setting up of the club – childcare or out-of-school-hours learning.

After-school childcare usually runs each night of the week and parents pay to use it in order for them to work or fulfil other commitments. Out-of-school-hours learning opportunities may indeed provide an element of childcare, but that is not their primary purpose. Clubs might run weekly, bi-weekly or monthly, possibly straight after school, but also at other times, such as in the evenings, before school, at weekends and during holidays.

Will I have to pay for my child to attend?

Many oshl activities are free, while others are charged for.

How will I know that my child is safe?

All adults involved in out-of-school-hours activities must have appropriate Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks in place.

Additionally, all providers of out-of-school-hours activities should be experienced, suitably trained, and have appropriate risk assessments in place.

Where do out-of-school-hours learning activities take place?

Oshl may be provided through the school, by others on the school site, or quite independently by a range of providers in a variety of settings, for example, youth clubs, church halls, leisure centres, arts centres, drama clubs, sports clubs, and private providers.

For further information about all of the above, please visit www.continyou.org.uk/oshl.



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Finding out more

For further information about oshl activities available in your area, consult:

- ✓ your child's school
- ✓ your local authority
- ✓ other local schools
- ✓ community centres
- ✓ leisure centres and sports clubs
- ✓ local colleges/universities
- ✓ local Children and Young People's Partnership publications
- ✓ libraries/local what's on guides
- ✓ local Family Information Service (FIS)
- ✓ ContinYou Cymru's website: www.continyou.org.uk/wales
- ✓ the internet (to find out information about local branches of national organisations, for example, scouts, guides, army cadets and the Urdd).

For further information about oshl and specific oshl-related projects and case studies, please visit www.continyou.org.uk/wales. For more information about the work of ContinYou Cymru in Wales, please visit www.continyou.org.uk/wales.

Acknowledgements

ContinYou Cymru is committed to supporting out-of-school-hours learning as a means of ensuring children and young people reach their potential and enjoy the wonders of becoming a lifelong learner.

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It was written by Angela Davies. It was produced for publication by staff at ContinYou: Paul Mephram (design) and Louise Reilly (editing). Welsh translation is by Vernon Hughes, Ruthin.

This guide is one of a series of oshl mini guides, which can be downloaded from www.continyou.org.uk/oshl.

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