

Active Partnerships

Engaging Communities, Transforming Lives

Active Gloucestershire



Active Gloucestershire Opening School Facilities Programme Case Study

Dene Magna School





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Improving the school's offer: how do we know what the community really wants?

Although Dene Magna School had for several years successfully opened its facilities for community use it was keen to expand and diversify its offer – and key to achieving that objective was to gain a much better understanding of local people's activity habits, needs and goals.



Dene Magna has a long track record of opening its facilities to the local community.



The school: Dene Magna School is located in Mitcheldean, a historic market town in the east of the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, and is a mixed secondary academy and sixth form with over 1000 pupils aged between 11 and 19.

As well as children from the town itself the school draws its mainly White British pupils from outlying, predominantly rural areas.

The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is much lower than that found nationally, and the school serves an area of relatively low overall socio-economic deprivation. When last inspected in November 2012 the school was judged by Ofsted to be outstanding.

Dene Magna has a long track record of opening its facilities to the local community, with access available to the school's sports hall, main hall, fitness gym, mini Astro/Multi Use Games Area, football/rugby fields and netball courts. With the only other similar facilities being located four miles away in Cinderford, Dene Magna's community offer plays an important part in meeting the activity needs of people living with the school's catchment area.



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The school was selected as it was a good example of a school that already had a successful community offer but was looking for ways of improving it further to enhance the health, wellbeing and activity opportunities open to local people.

Our main contact was the school's Community Coordinator, whose role also includes being the school's Duke of Edinburgh Manager and the Forest of Dean School Games Organiser, while strategic support was given by the Dene Magna's Headteacher and Business Manager.





What we set out to achieve with the school

The school wanted to expand their community offer as a way of enhancing the school's reputation as a leading local provider of sport and physical activity facilities, for being a genuine community resource and, as a way of increasing a valuable income stream.

As our work progressed, the school were also keen to understand the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their offer and how they could best recover from it. Key to achieving these goals was gaining a much better understanding of the local demand for sport and physical activity opportunities.

How the school was supported:

Working with the school we devised and hosted an online survey to capture the views of the school's parents, carers and wider community. The survey invited respondents to indicate the activities they currently take part in and those they would like to take part in, asked them about any barriers to participation they faced and what would encourage them to be active more often, or to try something new at the school. It also asked people to indicate their age group, sex, how far they were willing to travel and the best time of day (and why) for them to participate.

Finally, it asked people about their activity levels during the Covid-19 pandemic. The link to the survey was sent out via the school's comms channels with regular reminders to complete it, and to achieve the best response Active Gloucestershire incentivised the survey with a £100 online shopping voucher awarded to one randomly selected respondent.

The outcomes

202 people completed the survey, which was a healthy response rate. The results were collated and analysed by Active Gloucestershire and reported back to the school. In broad terms the survey found that there was significant demand for fitness classes, yoga, netball, tennis and – interestingly – adult education classes such as foreign languages.

The responses provided invaluable insight into barriers to participation, such as lack of time, cost, lack of clubs offering certain activities, and reflected the things people thought would help them take up activities at the school, such as the provision of family activities, lower costs than rival providers and access to taster sessions.

As a key next step we will work with the school to further interpret the survey's findings in the context of the current and future community offer, with the overall goal of ensuring the community's use of the school's facilities better matches their own hopes and expectations with regard to being active.



Dene Magna School found the survey to be a very helpful way of gaining valuable insight into the activity behaviours and aspirations of local people and aim to use the feedback as a springboard to improve and enhance their already popular community offer.

Key learning points

The impact of the pandemic meant that very few other schools in the county felt able to undertake a similar survey, which denied us the opportunity to investigate patterns and themes in the responses given by different communities.

Nevertheless, Dene Magna School found the survey to be a very helpful way of gaining valuable insight into the activity behaviours and aspirations of local people and aim to use the feedback as a springboard to improve and enhance their already popular community offer.

For further information please contact

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