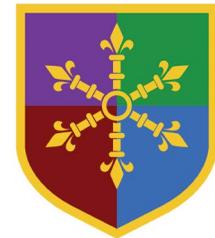


# Active Partnerships

Engaging Communities, Transforming Lives



School Lettings: Facilities,  
Operations and Staffing





## School Lettings: Facilities, Operations and Staffing

Budget cuts mean that every school has to consider ways to manage resources efficiently and generate income. Letting out recreational and sporting facilities can be a good way to earn money from the school site.

Leap works with schools to optimise the opportunities for quality P.E. provision. We also support initiatives that increase activity within communities. We see that with a good facilities management model in place, stronger links between schools and the communities in their catchment can have a positive impact for all.

### Managing School Lettings In-House

Whilst there are not-for-profit and commercial companies offering comprehensive facilities letting services, many schools prefer to manage external bookings in-house. The main challenge is the time it can take to respond to enquiries, liaise with groups and organise staffing. Leap has discovered a possible solution being used at Mandeville School.



### Mandeville School

From previous Children and Young People activities, including **Satellite Clubs** and an 'Active Girls' project, Leap knew that Mandeville School offered external lettings. We heard that they had invested in a lettings system and wanted to know more.

This secondary school was of particular interest because it is a catchment school for a Leap priority area. Our priority areas are those with a community which is identified as being at risk of inactivity.

Back in 2005, when schools were awarded specialist status, Mandeville School was recognised as a sports college. At the time an investment was made into sports facilities and equipment. Although that is some time ago, the facilities remain in good condition.

Leap met with the Facilities Officer at Mandeville School in Aylesbury to view the facilities and learn about School Hire. This online booking system has simplified the process of managing school lettings in-house. We wanted to share this good practice example, as it could help other schools who prefer an in-house approach.



Those interested in hiring the facilities can check availability and prices online, as well as making a provisional booking. There are pay-as-you-go or block booking options

### The School Hire System

School Hire is embedded into the school's website. All school facilities are listed with an image, description, hire rates and FAQs. Details of related options such as changing rooms and showers are also shown. This allows website visitors to get a good overview of the options without needing to contact the school.

Those interested in hiring the facilities can check availability and prices online, as well as making a provisional booking. There are pay-as-you-go or block booking options. The letting officer has a window of 48 hours to approve or decline the booking request. All approved bookings are logged, so the team has an overview of each week, enabling staffing to be arranged.

### The Cost Implications of School Hire

School Hire takes a 2% fee from each booking. The Lettings Officer identified that the system has made the process manageable and is cost-effective.

In addition to investment in the system, the school decided to employ a part-time caretaker who deals solely with opening and securing facilities before and after the evening and weekend bookings. This was cheaper and more realistic than paying the main school caretaker overtime. A security company has also been engaged for weekend lettings.



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## The Challenges of In-house Lettings Management

In Mandeville School, the lettings officer is employed during term times only. This means that approving facility bookings during the holidays, particularly during the Summer break, is an issue.

If not approved within 48 hours, the booking request is lost. This would be frustrating for hirers and could prevent community groups from utilising the space at a time where availability is at its peak. To address this, they are encouraging groups to book holiday slots in advance.

This may not be an issue if other schools are considering School Hire. LEAP has already spoken to another Buckinghamshire secondary school who were interested in in-house lettings management.

In this instance, a senior team member is in school throughout the year and he could take on responsibility for approving bookings and arranging site staff.



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## Use of School Facilities at Mandeville School

The outdoor **facilities at Mandeville School** include a floodlit, all-season, 3G football pitch, a grass football pitch and the multi-use outdoor games area. They are available to hire from 5-9 pm on weekdays and 8 am – 5 pm at weekends.

There have been some postponed bookings due to Covid-19, however, **local league football** is well represented with several groups using the FA-approved, flood-lit pitch, along with a football coaching organisation. A netball team use the MUGA pitch.

A large sports hall, main hall and dance studio are available within the school. They are used by a martial arts club, **Fight Klub** fitness, **Gateway club** for adults with disabilities and a Polish school.

Leap did send the school UK Active; Guidance on re-opening facilities to help them prepare for September. Unfortunately, the second lockdown has again restricted the viability of facility letting.



This booking system will simplify the processes as the school scales up its operations. It may assist other schools that prefer an in-house lettings solution to an external facilities management company.

## Increasing Community Engagement

Mandeville School is keen to increase bookings when restrictions are lifted. They are open to working with LEAP to explore ways to increase community engagement.

We have already discussed consulting pupils on their needs and wants for extra-curricular activities.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, these plans have been postponed. Meetings with the Finance Officer, Head of P.E. and Lettings Officer will be arranged in the New Year.

This booking system will simplify the processes as the school scales up its operations. It may assist other schools that prefer an in-house lettings solution to an external facilities management company.

