



Department  
for Education

## Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF)

### Oxfordshire County Council Annual Report (2024-2025)



#### **Useful Links:**

For programme information see: [Holiday Activities and Food Programme \(HAF\)](#)

For providers, activities and booking go to: <https://eequ.org/hafoxfordshire>

#### **Contacts:**

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**OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

## Overview of HAF Programme

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme provides free food and enriching activities for children and young people from Reception to Year 11 (ages 4-16) who are in receipt of benefits-related Free School Meals (FSM).

The programme was developed to address holiday hunger, recognising that over 17,000 children in Oxfordshire rely on school meals during term time. It also aims to reduce social isolation, provide professional oversight during school holidays, make sure all children can enjoy positive holiday experiences, which helps support their mental wellbeing.

It is significant that the number of children receiving Free School Meals continues to rise. This is shown in the table opposite.

Spring	Number	Index
2020	10,120	100
2021	12,426	123
2022	13,871	137
2023	12,733	126
2024	17,557	173
2025	18,781	186

Each HAF session must be at least 4 hours long and include:

- A nutritious meal
- At least 1 hour of physical activity
- Enriching activities that support learning and development
- Nutritional education for children and, indirectly, for their families

Each eligible child can book up to:

- 4 HAF sessions during the spring and winter school holidays
- 16 HAF sessions during the summer school holiday

The HAF Programme plays a vital role in supporting the health, wellbeing, and development of children and young people, while also offering valuable support to families during the school break. You can find more information on HAF guidance for 2024 by clicking [here](#).

## Collaboration and Partnerships

The HAF Team and our Providers continue to collaborate with a wide range of organisations and agencies to broaden the activity offer for children and young people. Some programmes are hosted in local museums, theatres, community centres, leisure centres schools and sporting venues. Others include day trips or on-site visits from external organisations to further enrich the experience.

We are actively working with various partners to enhance the training available to our providers—particularly in areas such as SEND and nutrition education.

In 2024, we supported local businesses through the procurement of equipment, seed kits, and food parcels. Many HAF providers also commission local catering companies for food provision, helping to strengthen community ties and support the local economy

## Funding and Expenditure

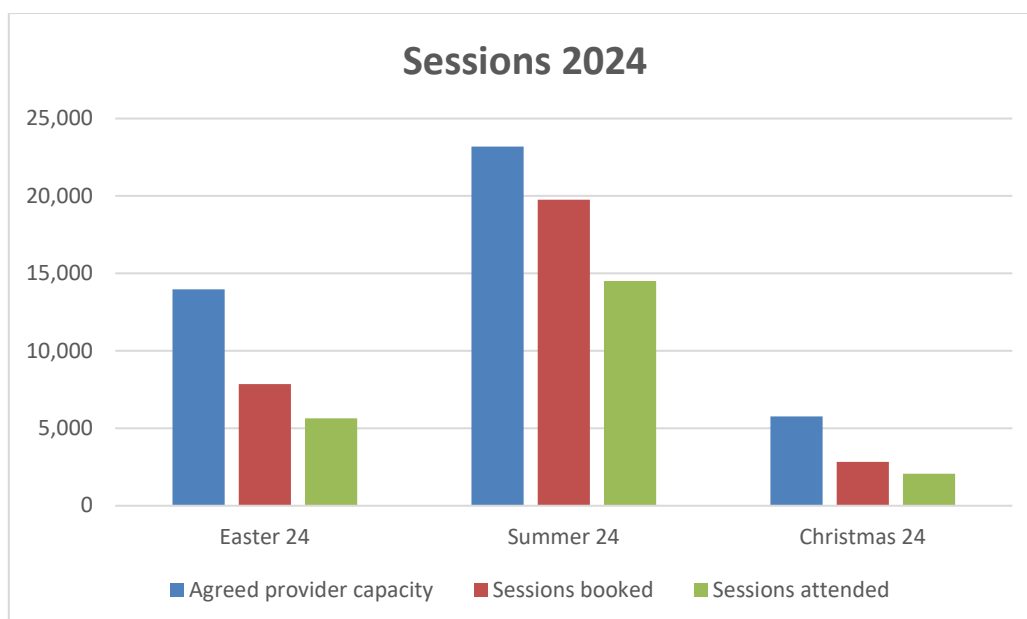
<b>Grant for 2024-2025</b>	<b>£1,546,630</b>
Administrative Expenditure <i>(staff costs, booking site)</i>	£164,760
Capital Expenditure <i>(this includes kits that we gave out to FSM children during provision)</i>	£14,803
Programme Expenditure <i>(includes all the costs of providing free HAF places, including payments to providers and third parties for services provided)</i>	£1,282,432
Other Expenditure <i>(Includes provider and staff training, letters to FSM families and promotional materials)</i>	£18,907
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£1,480,904</b>
Underspend	£65,725

*Figure 1: A snapshot of the expenditure in the year 2024-2025*

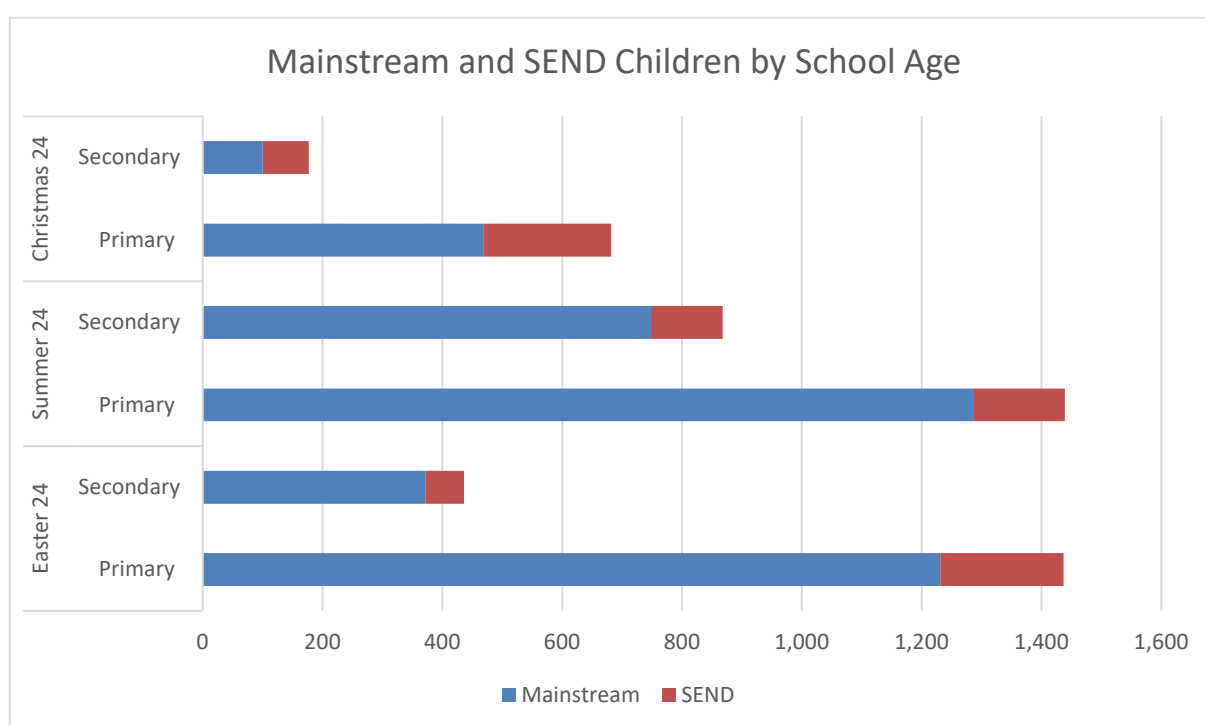
## **Performance**

Following each delivery window, we compile and submit a detailed performance report. This includes data on the number of sessions made available, sessions booked, and sessions attended, as well as the total number of individual children and young people who participated.

Below, you'll find visual breakdowns of this data by delivery window, providing a clear overview of engagement and reach across the programme.



*Figure 2: Number of sessions created, booked and attended for each delivery window. A session is defined as 1 day attended by 1 individual child.*



*Figure 3: Number of attendees from Primary and Secondary School settings for each delivery window analysed by mainstream and SEND provision.*

## Children and families' feedback

We've received some amazing feedback over the past year from families, children, providers, and professionals. Here are just a few highlights that reflect the impact of the HAF programme:

*'I'm sat in the Thomley grounds as I write... discovering this place on HAF this Easter half term has been magic!*

*My boys rarely get on and the fights are draining but at Thomley, with all the outdoor space something wonderful happened... the eldest was riding round giving my autistic son a lift on a go kart or tractor.... instead of wrestling on the blow-up pillow they worked together to bounce sand off the pillow (then put it back on and do it*



*As you kindly provided a lovely clean space with meals, I didn't have anything to do for the first time in a long time, so I was able to race the kids on the go karts, read a magazine and even just close my eyes and feel the sunshine in my face.*

*The biggest thing we have benefitted from is not feeling excluded or looked at and frowned upon! The acceptance that it's okay for T to just be himself and to find other parents who are also on a journey they may not have been expecting, and may be finding hard, but are doing the best they can! It's the first time I've not felt so alone in over 6 years since T was born!*

*Thomley is a place we may never have been able to visit, let alone stay so thank you for being part of HAF and inviting us to stay when there was a cancellation - we didn't only just survive Easter, with Thomleys' help, we thrived.'*

*Source: Parent of a child that attended HAF Oxfordshire activities.*

*"I have loved the teamwork, working with other people through team sports."*

*Source: HAF Child*

*"I learned that you don't need to be using a phone all the time and you can have fun doing other activities."*

*Source: HAF Child*

*"There have been 10-15 who have started the programme in quite a similar position where they are very reserved to begin with, but over the course of the provision they become a lot more involved and engage more. There is one who exhibited difficult behaviours when they started attending and over the course of time, they have improved their behaviours to the point where they are now a rugby team captain. "*

*"It was lovely to have such a diverse mix of children. Sharing the different Christmas traditions from other cultures was a highlight."*

*"Highlight of the camp so far was a child was crying and nervous when he first came in and is now running around saying 'this is the best day ever'"*

*Source: Various HAF Oxfordshire Providers*

## HAF Food Provision & Nutrition Engagement

**Daily Hot Meals:** All providers are required to serve a hot, nutritious meal each day that complies with the School Food Standards, the Eatwell Guide, and Natasha's Law.

**Food Preparation:** Meals are either prepared on site or sourced from external catering companies, ensuring flexibility while maintaining quality.

**Quality Assurance:** Food quality is monitored through on-site quality visits, which include menu reviews and direct observation.

**Healthy Incentives:** To encourage healthy choices, food vouchers distributed with gym memberships at local leisure centres are redeemable only for healthy food and drinks.

**Nutrition Education:** Children engage in hands-on activities like pizza making, providing a fun and practical way to learn about food and nutrition.

**Exploring New Foods:** Camps offer tasting sessions, salad making, and other interactive experiences to help children explore and try new foods.

## HAF Enriching Activity Provision

The HAF Programme is designed to give children and young people access to new experiences and skill-building opportunities they might not otherwise encounter. A diverse network of providers delivers a wide range of activities across various settings, including both focused and multi-activity camps.

### Outdoor & Nature-Based Activities

- Outdoor camps featuring fort building, campfires, and outdoor cooking
- Allotment visits encouraging hands-on learning about food and sustainability
- Canoeing, swimming etc

### Educational & Cultural Enrichment

- Field trips to museums and science labs
- Creative sessions such as shadow puppetry, fossil casting, and museum-led art workshops
- Trips to swimming pools, skate parks, cinema, ice skating etc.

### Performing Arts & Expression

- Street dance, drama, and talent shows to build confidence and creativity

### Digital & Creative Skills

- Music workshops, drone flying, and website building to foster digital literacy and innovation

### Physical Development

- Swimming lessons and bike riding instruction to promote physical confidence and safety

### STEM & Technology

- STEM-focused camps offering engaging, hands-on learning in science and tech

## HAF Physical Activity Offer

We are proud to offer a diverse and inclusive physical activity programme that supports children and young people in developing new skills, building confidence, and staying active. We are proud to offer a wide and inclusive range of physical activity opportunities through our network of sports providers. These include football and rugby clubs, boxing sessions, and gym memberships tailored for older children. This diverse mix ensures that children and young people of all interests and abilities can find an activity that engages and inspires them to stay active and healthy.

### **Wide Range of Activities**

Children and young people can engage in a variety of sports and physical activities, including:

- Football
- Rugby
- Cricket
- Archery
- Martial arts
- Racket sports (e.g. tennis, badminton)
- Gymnastics
- Yoga
- Cycling (including Bikeability training)
- Swimming (including swimming lessons)
- Outdoor pursuits (including woodland activities)
- Walking and running
- A wide range of ball games

### **Club-Based Sport Provision**

In addition, our network of providers offer structured coaching and opportunities for skill development in a supportive environment at:

- Rugby clubs
- Football clubs
- Cricket clubs
- Outdoor activity clubs
- Boxing clubs

## HAF Nutrition Education

While nutritional education is an area of the programme that is developing well, our quality visits highlighted that some of our Providers could do more to strengthen the way they support healthier lifestyles for children and families. Where it was delivered well, children said they thoroughly enjoyed meal preparation and cooking activities.



We are taking the following steps to continue to develop this area of the programme:

- **Resources:** We are working with partner organisations to improve the quality and accessibility of evidence-based nutrition resources.
- **Briefing:** As part of our recent meeting with Providers we included a presentation on nutritional education. This included signposting Providers to recommended resources and materials and offered practical ideas for relevant activities.

Activities already used by some Providers are listed below.

- **Supermarket Sweep:** Children select ingredients to create a meal
- **Games & Discussions:** Fruit Salad game, Spelling Bee, Healthy Plates activity
- **Tasting Sessions:** Encouraging children to try new foods
- **Meal Prep & Ingredient Talks:** Linking food to its impact on the body
- **Food Group Discussions:** Understanding balanced diets
- **Creative Learning:** Activity sheets and games integrated into arts and crafts
- **Take-Home Resources:** Including recipes for families
- **Guest Chefs:** Cooking demos and food education
- **Make & Pack Your Own Lunch:** Promoting independence and healthy choices
- **Campfire Cooking & Salad Bar Building:** Fun, hands-on experiences





## Supporting Children and Young People with SEND

Across the 2024–2025 period, the programme supported over 830 children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This was achieved through a combination of SEND-specific providers, who offer bespoke provision tailored to individual needs, and mainstream providers, where additional support is arranged to ensure inclusive access.

We prioritise funding for providers who offer dedicated SEND places and apply for SEND-specific funding, helping to ensure that demand is met. In addition, we make strategic use of the 15% vulnerability allowance to support children with SEND who may not meet the Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility criteria but would significantly benefit from participating in the HAF programme.

## HAF Communications & Engagement

**School-Based Outreach:** Schools play a pivotal role in promoting HAF. Each school has been invited to nominate a staff member as a HAF Ambassador to champion the programme and raise awareness among eligible families. Schools are also asked to share emails that contain HAF information with their FSM families.

**Direct Family Communication via Wonde:** We use Wonde to send HAF information directly to families through email and text. This includes eligibility codes<sup>1</sup> and booking links, significantly improving accessibility and ease of registration. We will be working with Wonde during 2025 to identify schools who are either not using/connected to Wonde or who do not carry out the assignment step it needs to access and use contact details of parents of FSM children.

**Social Media Promotion:** To reach a broader audience—especially the 11–16 age group—we actively promote the HAF Programme on X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and TikTok.

**Multi-Channel Information Sharing:** HAF updates are also shared through school newsletters, internal OCC communications, and the youth-focused website <https://oxme.info>.

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<sup>1</sup> From Christmas 2024 parents, parents do not need a code to book HAF places. This is because the new booking system, EEQU, can check eligibility against a GDPR compliant list of children on FSM. Where EEQU is not able to match a booking to the list, the details are sent to the HAF Team for review and manual confirmation or rejection. Once EEQU or the HAF Team have confirmed eligibility, the booking is passed to the Provider to approve after they have had an opportunity to contact the parents to obtain additional details if these are needed. EEQU emails the parents to keep them informed of the current status of their booking.

## Key Challenges

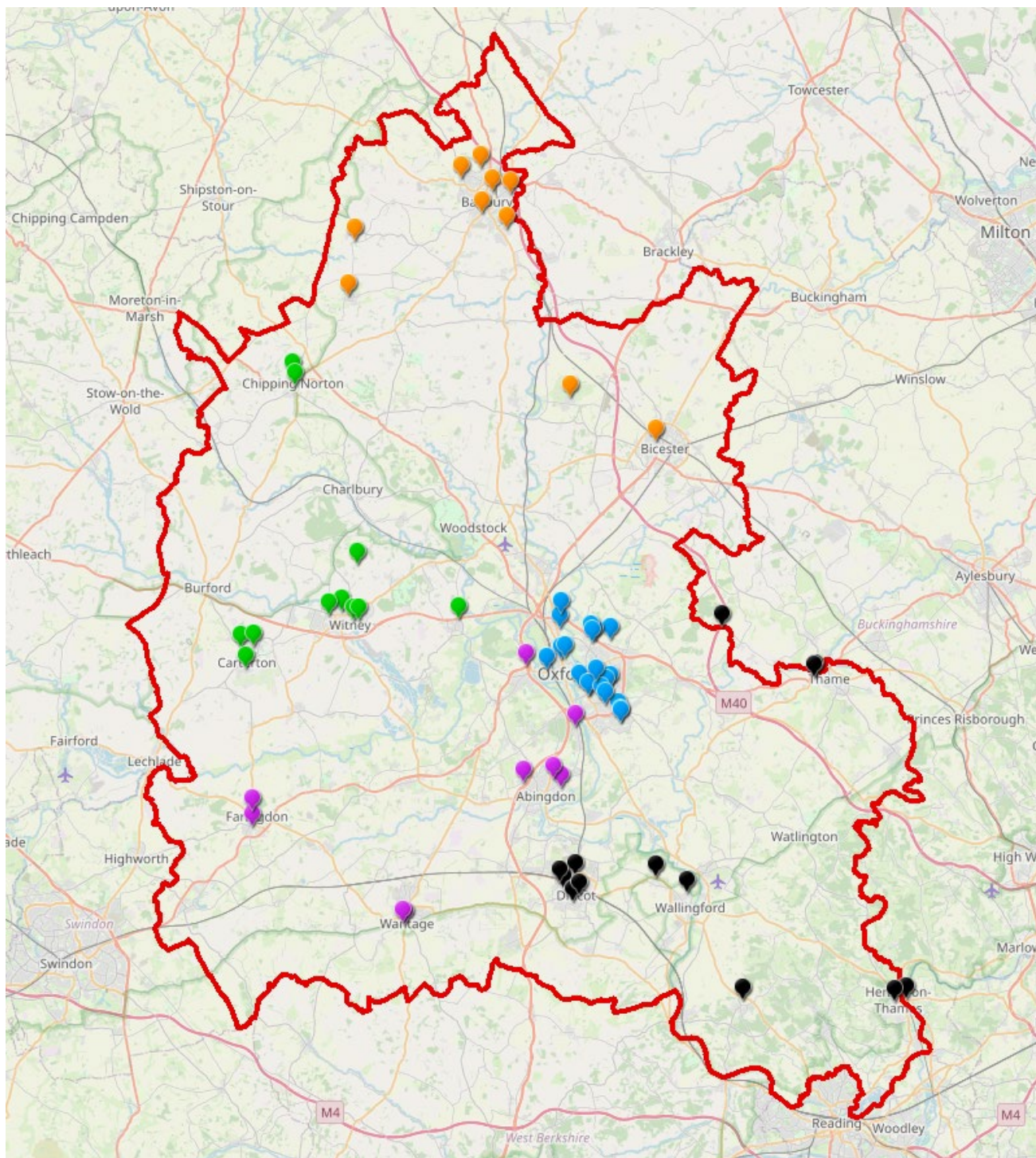
One of the key challenges we faced in 2024 was ensuring that HAF activities were distributed equitably across Oxfordshire, so that all children and families eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) could access provision locally. Oxfordshire is a large and geographically diverse county, with a Free School Meals (FSM) cohort of over 18,000 children and young people. Increasing costs coupled with constraints on budget and provision means that we are only able to provide HAF for around 1 in 5 children who are eligible to attend, and, for popular camps, places are booked very quickly.

Ensuring equitable access to Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) provision across all areas has been a key priority. To address this, we have used mapping tools and FSM data to identify areas of need and guide the placement of HAF sites. This is illustrated by the map on the next page. A live version of the map can be opened at <https://arcg.is/0m8ymO0>

Looking ahead, we plan to further develop this approach by sharing insights with our providers—highlighting where demand is highest—so they can make informed decisions about where to locate their provision. This will help ensure that no community is left behind and that support reaches those who need it most.

Our decision to move to the EEQU booking platform from Christmas 2024 will support our work on analysing and sharing data as it collects and allows monitoring of more detail.

**We would like to thank all partners who have worked with us  
to make our 2024-2025 HAF Programme a success!**



**Figure 4: Map showing location and spread of HAF sites available in the Summer of 2025.**  
A live copy of this map can currently be accessed at <https://arcg.is/0m8ymO0>

*This map is included here for the purpose of illustration*