Checklist for choosing an out of school club

1. Questions to ask on your visit to the club

Question to ask	Why does this matter?	Club response
How many children attend on a daily basis?	This will give you a feel for how crowded the space will feel and how lively (or otherwise) the club atmosphere is likely to be.	
How many staff work with the children each day?	There should always be at least 2 members of staff on duty, and ideally a minimum of 3 regardless of the total number of children so that there is always someone available to deal with unexpected incidents.	
What is the club's adult to child ratio for under 8s / over 8s?	For children under the age of 8 the statutory ratio is currently 1:8. For children over the age of 8 there is no statutory ratio but you should expect a ratio of around 1:10.	
What qualifications do staff have?	Although there are no specific qualification requirements for staff, the out of school club should still have staff who hold relevant and suitable training certificates, such as Safeguarding, Prevent training and perhaps SENCO or other CPD courses. The training will demonstrate that staff have suitable training to be competent in their role.	
Is the club run directly by the school or by a separate organisation?	For your child, the out of school club should feel like a break from the school day rather than a continuation of it. If the club is run by the school on school premises and with school staff, ask how the club session is clearly differentiated from the school day.	
Are all of the club's staff DBS checked?	All out of school clubs must take the safeguarding of children seriously. All staff and any regular volunteers must have a DBS check.	
Does anyone else use the building at the same time as the club?	If the club shares the premises with another organisation, ask how the club ensures that the children a) can't wander off and b) are kept safe?	

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Do the children have access to outdoor play space?	After being shut in school all day children need to be able to run around and let off steam. All clubs should either have direct access to outside space or at least give children the opportunity to play outdoors each day (eg by taking them to a local play park).	
Question to ask	**Why does this matter?**	**Club response**
What activities are available and can the children choose what they do?	Out of school clubs should be relaxation time for children. They should be able to choose activities that interest them and not be restricted to prescribed activities arranged by the club staff.	
What food and drink are provided, and can the children serve themselves?	Some clubs provide a hot meal, others just snacks. Food should be healthy and drinking water should be available at all times. Ideally children should be able to prepare their own snacks when they are hungry.	
What sanctions does the club use for inappropriate behaviour?	Sanctions applied at school should not be carried over into the out of school club. It is important to maintain a distinction between the two settings. The out of school club should be a less formal (but nonetheless safe) environment. You can ask to see the club's Behaviour Management policy.	
Can the club accommodate special dietary requirements?	Make sure that the club is aware of any special dietary or health requirements that your child may have.	
How many trained first aiders does the club have on site each day?	All clubs must have at least one person on duty who has a paediatric first aid certificate. If the premises are particularly spread out you would expect there to be more than one first aider.	
How far in advance do I need to book my child in?	Some clubs require sessions to be booked a term in advance, others are more flexible.	
Can I book for ad hoc sessions?	If the club does accept ad hoc bookings, check whether these are charged at the same rate.	
What happens if I am late collecting?	Clubs should have a clear policy for this which explains how you should contact them if you are held up. You will normally have to pay a late collection fee.	

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What happens if I need to get someone else to collect my child one day?	Clubs should have a clear policy on allowing other people to collect your child. This may involve the use of passwords or photo ID or some other method to confirm the identity of the collecting adult. The club must never release your child into the custody of another person without your express permission.	
Question to ask	**Why does this matter?**	**Club response**
What happens if my child falls ill or has an accident at the club?	Ask to see the club's Illness and Accidents policy. Clubs usually expect you to collect your child (or make arrangements for someone else to do so) as soon as possible if they fall ill. If your child has a serious accident the club will contact you as soon as possible and will accompany your child to hospital if necessary.	
Is the club Ofsted registered? If not, why not?	Most out of school clubs need to be registered with Ofsted. There are a few exemptions to registration (eg if it is open for 2 hours or less) so it is not necessarily an issue if the club is not registered, but you do need to know why.	
If the club is not on a school site, how are the children transported to the club?	You need to be sure that the club has considered the safety of your child. If the club walks the children from the school, how many staff supervise the children, how far do they have to walk, etc? If the children are transported by car, who is the driver, are they appropriately insured, etc?	
How does the club help new children to settle in?	You want to be confident that the club will consider the individual needs of your child.	

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2. Things to look out for during your visit

Look out for	Why this matters	Your observations
Do there appear to be a good range of toys and activities available and are they readily accessible to the children?	As mentioned above, children should be able to choose the activities that interest them. There should be a good range of activities and the children should be able to request other equipment or resources that are not currently set out if they would rather play with them.	
Ask to take a look at the toilets – are they clean and presentable?	Grubby toilets indicate poor standards on the part of the club, and children are usually reluctant to use them.	
Observe the interactions between staff and children – are the staff approachable?	You want to see evidence that the children like the staff and feel comfortable with them. Children should feel confident to ask for help when they need it and to express opinions and preferences.	
How do the children interact with each other?	The children's behaviour will reflect the attitude of the staff. If the children are respectful of each other, and kind and considerate, it suggests that the ethos of the club encourages such behaviour. Watch to see how staff deal with boisterous behaviour: appropriate physical play should be encouraged but staff should be alert and intervene promptly if events look likely to get out of hand.	

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