

A photograph of two young children, a girl and a boy, both smiling and looking towards the camera. They are wearing school uniforms. The girl on the left is wearing a red cardigan over a white shirt. The boy on the right is wearing a white shirt and a dark grey vest. They appear to be playing with a large cardboard box, which is partially visible on the right side of the frame. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green grass and a grey path.

# A reading list for teachers

Supporting children's play in schools

Schools are important places for play. Children say that playtimes are an important part of the school day. Play and break times provide children with time to relax, run around, play and be with their friends. Studies have shown that school playtime projects that aim to provide children with richer opportunities to play lead to a range of improvements in children's:

- academic performance
- attitudes
- attention
- behaviour
- social skills
- relationships between different groups of children
- enjoyment of and adjustment to school life.

It's important for children to have opportunities to be playful in school outside playtimes. Playful activities should be central to learning – for older children as well as for those in early years.

Play Wales has a wide range of useful resources to support play across the school day available at: [www.play.wales/resources-library](http://www.play.wales/resources-library)

### *Play for Wales* magazine – the play in schools issue

The spring 2019 issue of the *Play for Wales* magazine highlights the important role that schools have in supporting and providing the best quality spaces and opportunities for play as possible. It contains some policy focused articles, such as linking education and the right to play, includes examples of alternative approaches in Wales and features an article written by a primary school teacher about using loose parts play materials to encourage child-led learning.

#### Reflection points

The magazine article 'Play and education rights: making the links' introduces General Comment no. 17, published by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. The committee maintains that schools play a role in addressing some of the challenges relating to the fulfilment of the right to play and stresses that the structure of the day should allow for sufficient time for play.

To what extent does your school ensure that children's play time is protected and not taken away? What can you do to protect playtime for all children?

What observations do you make about how, where and when children play and what does this tell you about their play needs and preferences?



## A play friendly school – Guidance for a whole school approach

Endorsed by the Children’s Legal Centre and National Centre for Population Health and Well-being Research (NCPHWR), this guidance is designed to enhance the good work already being done to provide good play opportunities in schools. Developed to respond to Estyn’s *Healthy and happy – school impact on pupils’ health and wellbeing report*, which notes the importance of school play and break times, the guidance provides policy and practice related information to help school communities take a whole school approach to support children’s right to play.

### Reflection points

One of the points in the ‘15 steps to a play friendly school’ section of the guidance advises that the school identifies a play champion. Who on your staff team is best suited to this role and why?

The guidance recommends at least 60 minutes of playtime during the school day. How could this be ensured?

The guidance also talks about engaging with parents. How might parents help or hinder plans to enhance playtimes?



## Resources for playing – providing loose parts to support children's play – a toolkit

With examples from settings across Wales, this toolkit demonstrates how providing loose parts play materials offers limitless opportunities for learning and creativity and help children extend their own play and learning. It has been developed to support adults in the play, early years and education sectors to provide loose parts play within their settings.

*‘Resources for playing ... is just what is says on the tin – an easy to follow guide to get started with loose parts play which you can then grow into a sustainable, free or very cheap playground resource that will enthuse and energise children into more imaginative and co-operative play.’*

**Helen Borley, Headteacher  
Mount Stuart Primary School, Cardiff**

### Reflection points

Thinking about introducing loose parts, or using them more in your school, what are the opportunities? What are the challenges? How might you source more and varied loose parts?

Which parts of the toolkit could you use to address some of these opportunities and challenges?





## Right to play workshop

Designed for facilitation in schools to raise children's awareness of their right to play, the *Right to Play workshop* pack includes a workshop plan, as well as supporting materials and resources. It has been developed to support the local promotion, participation and advocacy of the right to play and to support children to become advocates for play.

### Reflection points

How can you and your pupils build on the workshop within teaching time to help children to advocate for better play opportunities?

How could children take a lead on improving opportunities for playing in school?



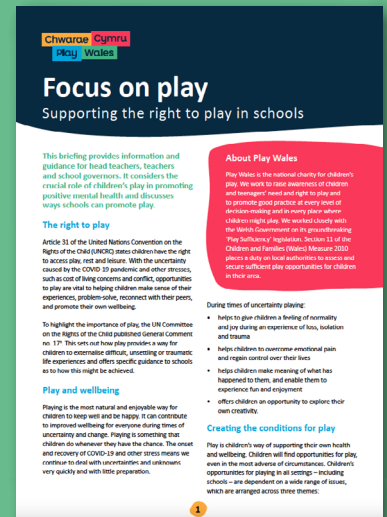
## Focus on play – Supporting the right to play in schools

This briefing is aimed at head teachers, teachers and school governors. It also offers useful information for everyone with a responsibility for providing children with opportunities to play.

It explains the crucial role of children's play in promoting positive mental health, and explores how schools can promote children's play.

### Reflection points

Does play feature as part of the whole school approach to wellbeing? Who in your school community can this briefing be shared with to promote play?



## Access to play in situations of crisis toolkit

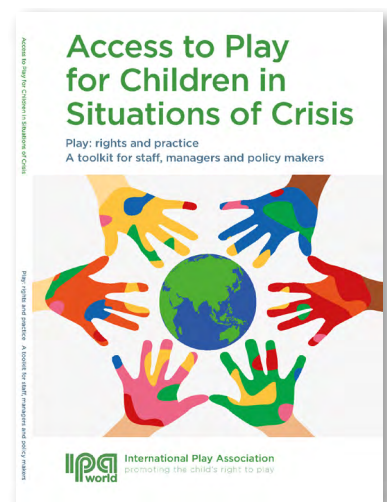
Produced to support people and organisations working in crisis situations so that they are better able to understand and support children's everyday play, this toolkit will help practitioners to understand the therapeutic value of play. Written by Play Wales for the International Play Association, the publication provides a useful starting point for supporting children to ease the stress of life.

### Reflection points

Some children live in accommodation with outdoor gardens, ample outdoor community space and supportive carers with time to support play, whilst others don't. Thinking about the children in your class, what do you know about their home situations and access to opportunities to play which you need to consider?

Some parents might be concerned about their child's academic progress. How can you help them to understand that playing must be prioritised to help support their children's wellbeing?

Do you believe that playing is crucial in school? How do you share this with others?





## ***Playwork essentials videos***

The *Playwork essentials* videos are bite-size introductions to aspects of playwork and include links to further resources. They are aimed at playwork learners and anyone who works with children who wants to understand more about using a playwork approach.

### **Reflection points**

The videos provide a brief overview of aspects of playwork practice. What are the implications for you in a school setting? Can you think of ways to embed aspects of a playwork approach in your work?

## **For parents and carers ...**

### ***Playful Childhoods***

A website full of fun, easy playful ideas for children to enjoy – from building dens to making splodgy paintings, splashing in puddles or playing hide and seek.

The website also includes tips for playful parenting and getting involved in children's play.

### ***IPA Play in Crisis: support for parents and carers***

A resource that gives parents and carers information and ideas to support children's play. Topics include the importance of playing in times of crisis and how to respond to children's play needs.

**Playful**  
Childhoods



[www.play.wales](http://www.play.wales)

Play Wales is the national organisation for children's play, an independent charity supported by the Welsh Government to uphold children's right to play and to provide advice and guidance on play-related matters.