

A photograph of two young children, a girl and a boy, in school uniforms. The girl is in the foreground, wearing a white shirt and a dark grey jumper, smiling broadly with her hair blowing in the wind. The boy is behind her, wearing a white shirt and a red sweater, also smiling. They appear to be playing outdoors on a paved area.

# 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 range of useful resources to support play across the school day, available at: [www.play.wales/resources-library](http://www.play.wales/resources-library)

### *Older children play too information sheet*

This useful resource explores the play of older children (particularly those aged 11 to 16 years old), and how to avoid assumptions based on age. It also looks at the play behaviours of older children, the barriers to play and the social consequences for teenagers if they feel unwelcome in their communities' public spaces.

#### **Reflection points**

Playing, relaxing and socialising are important parts of teenagers' lives. They contribute to teenagers' sense of identity as well as their development and wellbeing. What are the implications for you in a school or other educational setting?

Can you identify ways to provide more opportunities for older children to play and relax as part of their day? What are the challenges? What are the opportunities?



## 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 ‘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 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, this 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?



## Opening school grounds for play toolkit

This toolkit is designed to help head teachers, governors and local organisations to work together to consider making school grounds available to local children for playing out of school hours. It is intended to support the implementation of Welsh Government guidance regarding the use of school grounds for community use. The toolkit aims to dispel some worries and offer a starting point. It also includes helpful resources, such as: information about relevant legislation, policy and initiatives, a school play policy template, an out of school hours play plan template, and top tips on communicating with parents.

### 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?

Thinking about what your school already provides after school, can opportunities for play in the school grounds be part of your offer?





## ***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 includes tips for playful parenting and getting involved in children's play. It also has a section for parents and carers of teenagers to help them understand the importance of play.

**Find out more at: [www.playfulchildhoods.wales](http://www.playfulchildhoods.wales)**

**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.