

# Grounds for Learning film resource

Improvement questions

# 1. Why play

## Before viewing the video

Take a few minutes to talk together about your favourite childhood play memories.

Think about where you played, who you played with and what you played.

What do you think you learned as a child from these play experiences?

What kind of play goes on in your school playground? How does this differ from the kind of play you recalled from your own childhood?

How much outdoor play do your children get out of school? Do you know where they play outside locally?

## After viewing

Make a note of the different kinds of valuable experiences that you saw children engaging in in the video.

How does play in the video differ from the kind of play that children in your school currently experience?

How do you think children in your school would respond to having these kinds of opportunities?

How would you feel about supervising these kinds of activities in your school? Make a list of:

- The things that excite you about this
- The things that worry you about this.
- The people that would need to be on board with this for it to happen at your

school.

How could you encourage your school community to think about introducing the kind of ideas shown in the video?

Is there one thing you saw in the video that you think you could make a start with now?

## 2. The role of adults

### Before viewing the video

Think back to your own childhood play experiences that you shared last time. How many of these memories involved the presence of an adult?

Describe your role as a playground supervisor. List the kinds of things that you do outside during a typical playtime.

### After viewing

In the video, free play was described as 'behaviour that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated'. What kinds of play did you see in the video that fitted this description?

What are the benefits of this kind of play verses games and activities that are organized by adults?

Below are some of the suggestions from the video about how adults can support free play. Discuss and make some notes about how you feel about these ideas.

- Stand back and allow children to lead, resisting the temptation to 'show them how' or to suggest activities and mediate in disputes.
- Create an environment where children feel empowered to take control and direct play.
- Involve children in the development of a basic set of rules of conduct,
- especially relating to safety and mutual respect.
- Observe children's play closely to gain an understanding of what is happening – not just what children are physically doing but what is going on in their minds and relationships as they do it.

Use these observations to guide you planning about resources, materials and rules.

In these videos, the main responsibility for tidying up lies with pupils, not supervisors. How would you go about implementing this idea in your school?

# 3. Construction

## Before viewing the video

Share any memories you have of this kind of play from your own childhood.

How do you think children can benefit from this kind of play?

## After viewing

What kind of skills did you see children using when engaged in this kind of play?

What type of social grouping and interaction is taking place?

How are children being given control of their play in these kinds of activities?

Where might you be able to source some of these materials easily or cheaply?

Where would you store them?

What risks or concerns would you have about managing this kind of activity in your school?

Take a few minutes to look at each of these concerns and to discuss how you might manage them.

What would be a simple starting point for introducing loose construction materials into your school?

## 4. Wet and wintry

### Before viewing the video

What are your favourite childhood memories of playing out in the rain or snow?

How many different ways do you think you could play with a puddle? See if you can find at least 10.

What rain and snow restrictions are in place for outdoor play in your school?

### After viewing

How would you explain to a parent why it was important for their child to play out in all weathers?

All weather play is very common in the early years. Why is it much less common in primary schools? Is this mostly a matter of culture or are there any real practical differences between early years and primary?

What kinds of play work particularly well in wet and wintry weather?

How feasible would it be to offer a children in your school a choice about whether they go out to play in rain or not?

What are the top 3 challenges to providing all weather play in your school?

Take some time to come up with solutions to each of these.

What one step could you take now to start getting your children out more often in wet and wintry weather?

# 5. Physical literacy

## Before viewing the video

What kinds of features are there in your school playground to support this kind of play?

Do your playground rules currently support or restrict this kind of play?

## After viewing

Why are these basic movement skills so important for children?

What evidence did you see in the video of children's ability to master these skills through play?

Why does this kind of activity usually not lead to an increase in accidents?

What are your main concerns about introducing more of these kinds of opportunities in your school?

How could you manage these concerns?

What would be the best way of introducing more of these opportunities in your school?

# 6. Risk in Play

## Before viewing the video

Adults with responsibility for children have a duty of care to ensure that they are not exposed to unnecessary levels of risk. However, there is evidence that in recent years we have allowed concerns about risk to deprive children of important and enriching play experiences. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has expressed concern that this kind of over-protective approach to children's play leaves them ill equipped to manage risk in their adult lives.

Play - and particularly play outdoors - teaches young people how to deal with risk. Without this awareness and learning they are ill equipped to deal with working life. Young people are curious, and they learn quickly. We should not deny them the opportunity to learn by taking risks. Seeking to protect them from every conceivable hazard, rather than sensibly managing the genuine risks they face, ultimately leaves them in harm's way, not to mention robbing them of memories that last a lifetime.

Judith Hackitt, Chair of HSE

Do you agree with this view? If so, why? If not, why not?

The Early Years Framework states that 'Children are entitled to take part in physical activities and to play, including outdoors, and have an opportunity to experience and judge and manage risk.'

**Video: Natural Play - The Berlin Story**

**Video: Natural Play - The Scottish Story**

## After viewing

What did you observe about the way children used the more risky features in the videos?

When the Forestry Commission evaluated more adventurous free play in a Glasgow primary school they found a 'dramatic reduction in physical injuries'.

Why might this be?

Why can more risk in play be good for children?

How can children be involved in developing rules about the use of features that have a greater degree of risk?

# 7. Water

## Before viewing the video

Why are children so attracted to water for play?

Share your memories of water play from your own childhood or from watching children.

Are there any forms of water play currently available in your playground?

## After viewing

What skills did you see children using and developing while engaged in water play?

What would be the simplest kind of water play you could introduce in your school?

How could you introduce water play in a way that helps children to set and keep sensible ground rules?

Where could you source some of the resources shown in the video; buckets, watering cans, pipes, guttering etc?

One of the best resources for outdoor play in school is an outdoor tap. Do you have one already? If not, how feasible would it be to install one?



# 8. Den building and hiding

## Before viewing the video

Did you ever make dens as a child? Were there adults supervising?

How much opportunity do children have these days to play away from adult eyes?

How might children benefit from being able to hide in small intimate spaces during school playtimes?

## After viewing

Schools that feature in the video report that allowing secluded play doesn't create behaviour problems.

Why might this be?

Is there anywhere in your own setting children can play hiding games, be alone with friends, etc? How do you supervise this? What are the current rules?

Could you adapt any ideas from the video for use in your own setting?

What supervision / management strategies could you use to enable more secluded play in your school?

Are there 'out of bounds' areas that could be opened up for secluded play?

# 9. Sand

## Before viewing the video

Share your childhood memories of sand play at the beach or in sand pits.

Why is sand play so attractive for children?

Sand play is very common in early years. Why do you think it's not so common in primary schools?

## After viewing

List the different activities you saw children doing with sand. Try to remember as many as you can.

What skills did you see children developing through sand play?

What kind of additional materials and resources were used to enrich sand play?

How were schools dealing with the practical issues of mess, clothing and cat poo?

How might you be able to introduce temporary sand play in your school using tarpaulins?

# 10. Small world

## Before viewing the video

What kind of small world play can you recall from your own childhood?

How common is this kind of play in your school at the moment? What sort of things do children do?

Are there particular parts of the playground where this kind of play is more common?

If so, why is this?

## After viewing

Why is this kind of play so important for children?

What kinds of materials are already accessible in your playground to support this kind of play?

How could you support more of this kind of play in your school? Think about natural materials that you could grow in the grounds as well as man-made items that you could introduce. What do you already have indoors in school that could be used for small play if taken outside?

This is perhaps the cheapest and simplest way of enriching play in your school. Make a simple action plan below of how you can develop small world play. Identify 2 or 3 actions and agree who is going to do them and by when.

# 11. Building support

## Before viewing the video

Where do you think your schools is with play on a scale of 0 (poor) to 10 (great)?

Which 3 ideas from these videos do you think would be most easy to introduce into your school?

Whose support would you need to make these new ideas happen?

How supportive to you think these people would be to your top 3 ideas?

## After viewing

What would be the best ways of getting support for your top 3 ideas from the following groups? Try to identify 2 or 3 ideas for each group.

- School management
- Parents
- Other staff
- Your Local Authority

Where could you get free or cheap materials for your top 3 ideas?

Who could support you to develop and implement your ideas? Do you have early years colleagues, parents or play staff in your Local Authority who have useful skills and experience?

Planning and managing improvements to play in your school will take time. How could you create time and a simple structure for discussing and planning play provision in your school? Who all would need to be involved in this group?

Can you identify a different play theme or development for each of the next 3 terms?

How could you take this forward?

What will be the top maintenance needs to keep your play resources fresh and safe?

Who will do this and how?

**Education Scotland**

Denholm House  
Almondvale Business Park  
Almondvale Way  
Livingston EH54 6GA

**T** +44 (0)141 282 5000

**E** enquiries@education.scotland.gsi.gov.uk

[www.education.gov.scot](http://www.education.gov.scot)