

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 13 January 2015

City of Edinburgh Play Strategy – referral from the Education, Children and Families Committee

Item number	7.22
Report number	
Wards	All

Executive summary

The Education, Children and Families Committee on 9 December 2014 considered a report on the City of Edinburgh Play Strategy. The Committee agreed to refer the report to the Transport and Environment Committee to raise awareness, and increase consideration of the impact committee decisions have on children's play.

Terms of Referral

City of Edinburgh Play Strategy

Terms of referral

- 1.1 On 9 December 2014, the Education, Children and Families Committee considered a report on the City of Edinburgh Play Strategy.
- 1.2 The Education, Children and Families Committee agreed:
 - 1.2.1. To accept the revision of Play in Partnership: a Play Strategy for the City of Edinburgh.
 - 1.2.2. That Play in Partnership: a Play Strategy for the City of Edinburgh be circulated to the Culture and Sport, and Transport and Environment Committees to raise awareness, and increase consideration of the impact Committee decisions have on children's play.
 - 1.2.3. To accept the policy principles to use primary school grounds for community use for play outside of teaching hours.
 - 1.2.4. To note the significant commitment of time and fundraising from parents in helping transform school playgrounds
 - 1.2.5. That the Play Strategy be amended to detail the financial commitments made under the rising rolls report to improve playgrounds adversely affected by new accommodation.
 - 1.2.6. To thank the officers for their work on the play strategy.

For Decision/Action

- 2.1 The Transport and Environment Committee is asked to consider the attached report.

Background reading / external references

Education, Children and Families Committee 9 December 2014.

Carol Campbell

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Links

Coalition pledges	See attached report
Council outcomes	See attached report
Single Outcome Agreement	See attached report
Appendices	City of Edinburgh Play Strategy – report by the Director of Children and Families

10am, Tuesday, 9 December 2014

City of Edinburgh Play Strategy

Item number	
Report number	
Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	All

Executive summary

The report provides a summary of the progress made in Outdoor Play and Active Learning from October 2013 - October 2014. It reviews the City of Edinburgh Play Strategy, *Play in Partnership: a Play Strategy for the City of Edinburgh* in response to the latest national and international guidance.

The report includes results of an audit of current arrangements for access to primary school playgrounds for play out with teaching hours, and the attached document sets out policy principles on access to primary school playgrounds for play out of teaching hours.

Links

Coalition pledges	P5
Council outcomes	CO1 , CO2 , CO3 , CO4 , CO5 , CO6
Single Outcome Agreement	SO3

City of Edinburgh Play Strategy

Recommendations

- 1.1 That Committee accepts the revision of *Play in Partnership: a Play Strategy for the City of Edinburgh*.
- 1.2 That *Play in Partnership: a Play Strategy for the City of Edinburgh* is circulated to the Culture and Sport, and Transport and Environment Committees to raise awareness, and increase consideration of the impact Committee decisions have on children's play.
- 1.3 That Committee accepts the policy principles to use primary school grounds for community use for play outside of teaching hours.

Background

- 2.1 *Play in Partnership: a Play Strategy for the City of Edinburgh* was adopted by Council in 2000, and reviewed in January 2009.
- 2.2 In June and November 2013, the Scottish Government launched the national *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision*, and *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan* and subsequently a review of *Play in Partnership: a Play Strategy for the City of Edinburgh* has been developed in line with the national policy.
- 2.3 The Education, Children and Families Committee of 8 October 2013 approved the recommendation to review the policy for the community use of school grounds for play outside teaching hours.

Main report

Key Achievements October 2013 to October 2014.

- 3.1 Councillor Keith Robson has taken up the role of Play Champion, chairing the developing Edinburgh Play Forum which meets quarterly. The Play Forum is a partnership of voluntary sector play organisations supported by the City of Edinburgh Council and Inspiring Scotland to provide a vehicle to build play opportunities in communities and attract additional funding for play projects. The Edinburgh Play Forum will inform the Council's Play Strategy Steering Group.
- 3.2 The Grounds for Learning Playing Naturally in Schools project, worth a total of £150,000, at Carrick Knowe, Castleview, Lorne, Granton, Buckstone and Sighthill Primaries is nearing completion. The experience from the successful Grounds for

Learning project at Castleview Primary has shown that it is possible to enhance the school playground for play in partnership with PPP providers without making changes to the existing contract. Children's play opportunities have been greatly enhanced and project schools are reporting an improvement in social interaction, behaviour, inclusion and learning, in addition to higher levels of physical activity. The schools will act as exemplars for transforming school grounds for natural play and outdoor learning opportunities.

- 3.3 Cramond Primary School was successful in attracting Active Places Legacy Funds and the school and Parent Council raised funds to match. The management of the design and installation of the extensive landscape project (£104,000) was overseen by the Head Teacher in partnership with the Parent Council. The head teacher reports that the impact on play, pupil social, emotional and physical development within the school day and beyond is immeasurable. Staff no longer have to deal with playground squabbles, concentration levels are improved and collision injuries have been reduced. Staff use the outdoor space for learning and families use it after school and at weekends and as a community place.
- 3.4 A Grounds for Learning bus tour/conference to learn from natural play projects was organised in partnership with the Council on 3 October 2014 and delegates from across Scotland visited Castleview, Buckstone, Sighthill and Cramond Primaries.
- 3.5 The Education, Children and Families Committee of 8 October 2013 noted a commitment to the inclusion of outdoor play and active learning through the design of school grounds when planning for new schools. This principle is being practised in the new nursery developments at Wardie, Duddingston and Fox Covert nurseries, and will be included in any future new primary schools.
- 3.6 Parent Councils at Bruntsfield and Trinity primaries have both been successful in attracting Legacy funding. Currently Bruntsfield is at the stage of letting the contract, with a target completion date of March 2015. Bruntsfield Primary plans to have a closed playground with the facilities only available out of hours through the leasing system. Trinity is still in the design and planning stage.
- 3.7 Sciennes Primary's current focus is on works which seek to refurbish the existing playground areas as a school and community asset. The scope includes the existing landscape strip (south of Sciennes Road) which may offer additional community play space. They have received South Central Neighbourhood Partnership funding to commission designs for the playground areas and landscape strip with the intention to progress a February submission for **sportscotland** Legacy 2014 Active Places. It should be noted this Active Places submission is not connected to the proposal to extend the playground into Sciennes Road (Phase 3).
- 3.8 Parent Councils at other primary schools are at various stages of actively seeking funding and planning for playground improvement projects. These include Broughton, Flora Stevenson, James Gillespie's, Towerbank, Royal Mile, South Morningside and Currie primaries.

- 3.9 A full day Loose Parts* play training, including risk benefit assessment, was delivered in partnership with Grounds for Learning for whole staff teams and all pupils at each of the six Playing Naturally project schools. In addition three training days, including dynamic risk assessment to support challenge and 'risky' play, were attended by all 50 Pupil Support Assistants to enable them to facilitate natural play during school breaks.
- 3.10 The promotion of play and active learning outdoors continues to be targeted through play development training across the city. A further 629 staff from Early Years and Primary settings have received play development training for Outdoor Play and Active Learning, Forest Education, Lead Teacher in Outdoor Learning (in partnership with the Sports and Outdoor Learning Unit), and Loose Parts Play over the year. A partnership has been developed with Play Box in Gilmerton to extend capacity to deliver loose parts training, and classes from schools can now visit Play Box for taster sessions before developing their own school resources.
- 3.11 The Nature Play Conference was held in March 2014 in partnership with the Edinburgh Forest Education Initiative Cluster Group. The theme of engaging families in nature play provided 90 delegates with a wide range of practical ideas and activities to enhance children's outdoor play experiences and develop outdoor learning partnerships between practitioners and parents.
- 3.12 In the past 12 months a total of 306 Early Years and CLD practitioners have received play@home, PEEP and Pre-Birth to Three training to support parents to play with their children. A partnership between Play Development, NHS Lothian and the Information Learning Resources have facilitated the delivery of play@home pre-school books to the families of every 3 year old across the city attending Early Years settings.
- 3.13 In the community a total of 86 parents have received play training, and 34 Out of School Care workers attended workshops on loose parts and outdoor play.
- 3.14 Edinburgh's Playday event in The Grassmarket on 30 July 2014 highlighted the importance and value play opportunities to families, and was estimated to have the highest number of children playing in a city street in the history of the event, attracting over 1,000 participants. Playday posts were the most popular ever viewed on the Bright Futures blog (over 3,000 views), and was also one of the highest ever 'hits' on the Council Facebook page with over 10,000 people reached.
- (*Loose Parts Theory [Nicolson, 1971] uses natural and recycled materials which can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, taken apart and put back together in multiple ways, providing a rich play environment.)
- 3.15 The City of Edinburgh Council playcards which are distributed at Playday events have been made available to parents on line through the Council website. Research for the national Play Strategy Implementation Group found that Edinburgh led the way in terms of making information available to parents and carers on cost-effective play resources in the home, relative to the amount of information available from local authorities across Scotland.

- 3.16 A pilot Play Ranger project was organised by a partnership between the Council, The Yard Adventure Centre, The City of Play and North Edinburgh Arts centre and funded by Inspiring Scotland. The outdoor, adventurous, free-play project was operated by staff from The Yard at no cost to children on a brownfield site in Muirhouse for 20 days during July-August 2014. The project was attended by an average of 30 children daily.
- 3.17 Playing Out, an information and planning event has led to the development of a tool kit in partnership with Council roads officers to assist residents to organise road closures for street play opportunities in their communities. The first resident led Playing Out event took place on 30 October 2014.
- 3.18 Edinburgh Play Forum member The City of Play, social enterprise landscape architects, made a presentation to Planning Committee members on the importance of play and the consideration of playful city design and planning for housing.

Play Strategy Review

- 3.19 The publication of the Play Strategy for Scotland has national influence on the way that play should be addressed and includes a rights based approach. The strategy is divided into four domains: In the Home; At Nursery and School; In the Community; and Positive Support for Play.
- 3.20 A review of *Play in Partnership: a Play Strategy for the City of Edinburgh* has been developed in line with the national policy. The play sector across the city was consulted on the policy statements contained in Edinburgh's current play strategy document, through the Edinburgh Play Forum and at a public event, Putting Play on the Map. This has led to revisions of the play strategy vision, values and outcomes. (Appendix 3)
- 3.21 Pupils at eight primary and three secondary schools in Edinburgh responded to two surveys on play. 357 primary pupils completed the *Play Survey* and 286 secondary pupils completed the *'Hanging Out'/Play Survey*. Both surveys asked similar questions, with some of the wording and some of the possible responses tailored to younger or older children/young people as appropriate. 73% of Primary but only 23% of Secondary pupils felt that their school grounds were a good place to play or hang out.
- 3.22 A survey of 77 primary schools in Edinburgh in April 2014 found that less than 20% had a school play policy. The survey found that 42% of schools had grounds which were freely available to children out of school hours, and of these 38% were available for play at all times (evenings, weekends and holidays). A total of 16% of all schools had grounds which were partially available, but 42% of schools had grounds which were not at all available for play out of hours.

Future Priorities for the Play Strategy Action Plan

In the Home

- 3.23 Play@home will continue to be provided as a training course for practitioners supporting parents on the CPD directory for the next year. We will continue to support

the delivery of play@home pre-school books to every 3 year old across the city in Early Years settings. The next cohort of books will be distributed in January and February 2015 through the Information Learning Resources unit.

- 3.24 Play training sessions will continue to be delivered as part of the Pre-Birth to Three programme.
- 3.25 Information and resources for parents will continue to be made available on-line, with further resources developed. A survey of parents attending Edinburgh's Playday on their attitudes to play will inform what type of play information may be most useful in influencing parents.

At Nursery and School

- 3.26 In nurseries and other Early Years settings a priority will be to support the development of play gardens in facilities providing provision for Eligible Twos. £40,000 has been allocated to the OPAL Space for Two's project which will be rolled out to Early Years Hubs to support practice and improve outdoor space in 12 settings.
- 3.27 Support will continue to nurseries and schools for the development of play spaces, with priority given to Wardie, Fox Covert and Duddingston Nurseries and Rising Roles Primaries.
- 3.28 Positive Action Schools will be a priority for school ground improvements for play. A funding bid is being developed with the External Funding Officer to develop and deliver natural play in 12 school grounds over a three year period, linking to Modern Apprenticeship and / or Activity Agreements to engage young people in the project.
- 3.29 Support will continue to be given to schools seeking to help to develop their school grounds. Advice on issues for schools to consider when planning and fund raising for play facilities in school grounds are included in the accompanying document (Appendix 4) setting out policy principles and considerations for the use of school grounds out of hours for play.
- 3.30 Support will be given to schools to develop individual school play policies.
- 3.31 Play training in nurseries and schools will continue to be promoted through Outdoor Play and Active Learning (OPAL). Loose Part Play training will be delivered to promote positive use of outdoor play space in nurseries and schools. Rising Roles Schools will be particularly targeted to assist staff to make best use of changing playground facilities.
- 3.32 Play in outdoor learning will be prioritised through staff training in Lead Teacher in Outdoor Learning, Forest Education practitioner qualifications, and other CPD opportunities.
- 3.33 The annual Nature Play conference in partnership with Outdoor Woodland Learning (formerly FEI) will take place in March 2015.

In the Community

- 3.34 School buildings and their grounds often represent the largest single asset for many local communities. The primary school playground is the closest open space to the homes of many children, particularly those living in city centre tenements with no access to outdoor space. Opportunities for children to play in their community will be enhanced through access to primary school grounds for play out of teaching hours.
- 3.35 If accepted by Committee, the accompanying document (Appendix 4) setting out policy principles and considerations for the use of school grounds out of hours for play will be promoted with primary schools across the city to support the community use of school grounds for play. Core principles are:
- 3.35.1 Children have access to the playground for freely chosen play (as opposed to community leasing of sports facilities or 'pay and play')
 - 3.35.2 A range of options are considered, depending on the individual school and community need, including: open access; access limited by time/and or space; playground access during current leasing hours; access through a stewardship agreement
 - 3.35.3 School gates are not locked as a default position, but consideration is given to whether they should be locked, when gates should be locked and by whom they are locked, and if they can be left open
 - 3.35.4 When improving school grounds for play, additional costs may be incurred and must be considered by the school community when raising funds
 - 3.35.5 Safety and risk is put into a real rather than perceived context using risk benefit assessment. Building risk-benefit assessment into the risk management approach to open playgrounds takes into consideration all relevant factors
- 3.36 PPP Project School contracts currently require that all schools and grounds are left secured at the end of each core hour day. The opening of PPP primary school grounds for community use for play outside of teaching hours would represent a change to the existing contractual arrangements and would require detailed discussion and engagement within each Project Agreement, and consent cannot be presumed or guaranteed. To consider a change in PPP contract agreements would require costs to be incurred through the provision of legal and other relevant advice and, if agreed, would also be likely to result in a change to the ongoing unitary charge which is paid for the schools in question to cover variations such as changes to insurance cover and the associated premiums.
- 3.37 It will be a priority to communicate with primary Head Teachers on the dissemination of the policy principles and to share good practice. Consideration on the use of school's for community use for play out of school hours will be made on a case by case basis in discussion with the relevant Services for Communities officers and PPP partners.
- 3.38 The Playing Out Toolkit will be made available on-line, and resources required for road closures will be made available in Neighbourhood centres.

- 3.39 Funding will be sought for further Play Ranger projects to deliver outdoor adventurous play in partnership with Inspiring Scotland and the voluntary sector.
- 3.40 Funding is being actively sought from the private sector to organise a Festival of Play, bringing the type of activities showcased at Playday to communities across the city with assistance from Inspiring Scotland. (It should be noted that talks on funding have been delayed due to a change of staff at Inspiring Scotland.)
- 3.41 Play Development will contribute to work undertaken by Planning and Parks and Greenspace officers on the reviews of the Open Space Strategy and Play Area Action Plan, and contribute information from pupil play surveys.

Positive Support for Play

- 3.42 Edinburgh's Play Champion will continue to promote play city wide and seek media opportunities to inform the public of the importance of play to children and young people's well being and development.
- 3.43 The Edinburgh Play Forum will continue to develop and contribute to the partnership approach of the play strategy implementation. New partnerships will continue to be sought to deliver support for play city wide.
- 3.44 Opportunities will be explored to make further use of Council social media to promote play to the Edinburgh public.

Measures of success

- 4.1 Increased awareness of the benefits of play for child development to parents and communities, measured by: uptake of play@home resources; number of website views for playcards.
- 4.2 Increased children's opportunities for regular outdoor free play and active learning, measured by: the number of schools and nurseries making ground improvements for play; the number of schools participating in play training; the number of schools operating play strategies.
- 4.3 Increased community access to play opportunities measured by: the number of schools implementing effective approaches to dealing with the various practical challenges and issues involved in providing play in schools out of hours; the numbers of children attending Play Ranger projects; the numbers of communities organising Playing Out street events.
- 4.4 Playday attendance and survey; views of social media and webpage content.

Financial impact

- 5.1 There is a neutral impact on overall Council budgets.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 Risk in play settings is managed through recognised benefit risk assessment principles in individual settings. Compliance for annual inspections will be made by Corporate Property.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 The rights of the child will be enhanced by improving all children's right to play (UNCRC article 31).
- 7.2 Not every child will be able to access every facility as a range of challenge and risk should be available, however every child should have access to facilities relevant to their age, stage, ability and cultural preference.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 There are no impacts on carbon, adaptation to climate change or sustainable development arising directly from this report.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 77 primary schools responded to a survey on use of grounds out of hours.
- 9.2 357 primary pupils completed the *Play Survey* and 286 secondary pupils completed the *'Hanging Out'/Play Survey*.
- 9.3 Edinburgh Play Forum members were consulted on the contents of Edinburgh's Play Strategy.
- 9.4 The Putting Play on the Map consultation event was widely advertised through-out the third sector via EVOG and Edinburgh Play Forum partners.
- 9.5 Parent's views on their children's play and attitudes to play were sought during a consultation carried out with adults attending Playday.

Background reading/external references

[UN General Comment on Article 31](#)

[Scottish Government, Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision](#)

[Scottish Government, Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan](#)

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Links

Coalition pledges	P5 Seek to ensure the smooth introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence and that management structures within our schools support the new curriculum
Council outcomes	CO1 Our children have the best start in life, are ready to make and sustain relationships and are ready to succeed CO2 Our children and young people are successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens making a positive contribution to their communities CO3 Our children and young people in need, or with a disability, have improved life chances CO4 Our children and young people are physically and emotionally healthy, CO5 Our children and young people are safe from harm and fear of harm, and do not harm others within their communities CO6 Our children's and young people's outcomes are not undermined by poverty and inequality
Single Outcome Agreement	SO3 Our children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential
Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Play Review Report (13 January 2009)2. Outdoor Play and Active Learning Report (8 October 2013)3. Draft Play in Partnership: a Play Strategy for the City of Edinburgh 20144. Draft Policy on access to primary school playgrounds for play out of teaching hours.5. Photographs of natural play playground improvements

Play in Partnership: a Play Strategy for the city of Edinburgh

Revision Draft (2014)

International and National perspectives

Freedom to play is every child's right under article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 2013 the UN published General Comment number 17 on article 31, which expands and describes what the UNCRC means by the right to play. In response the Scottish Government launched the national *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision*, and *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan*. *Play in Partnership: a Play Strategy for the city of Edinburgh* reflects these principles.

What is Play?

Play is fundamental to children's quality of life, and it is the way that they enjoy their childhood. It is often described as 'what children and young people do when not being told what to do by adults'. Play is fun, but it can also be challenging and make children's hearts beat faster! It can be lively or relaxed, noisy or quiet, solitary or with friends. Play can happen with or without equipment, indoors or outside. It can be light hearted or very, very serious!

Why Play?

Play is essential for children's healthy physical and emotional growth, to acquire social and behavioural skills and for their educational development. Children need freedom to play to practise skills, explore the world around them and develop understanding in their own way and in their own time. The essence of play is that it comes from children's innate need to express themselves, to explore, learn about and make sense of their world.

Edinburgh's Vision

Edinburgh aims to be a play friendly city where all children and young people can enjoy their childhood. They will have access to play opportunities in a range of different settings which offer variety, adventure and challenge. They will be able to play freely and safely and make choices about where, how and when they play.

Edinburgh's Play Values

1. Play is a fundamental right for every child.*
2. Play is an activity which is valuable in its own right. It is about the fun and satisfaction of the participant and benefits children, young people, families and communities.
3. Play is a valued activity through which children and young people can express and manage their feelings, make new friends, acquire new skills, and gain an understanding of the world around them, supporting them to achieve the best start in life.
4. Play in Edinburgh values the benefit of risk and challenge based on risk benefit assessment. Every child and young person in Edinburgh should be able to play freely and safely while learning to manage risks, and make choices about where, how and when they play according to their age, stage, ability and preference.
5. Children and young people in Edinburgh have the right to well maintained, quality play environments which provide stimulation and challenges relevant to their age and ability.
6. The views, opinions and experiences of children and young people should be a central consideration in the development of play policies and especially in the planning and design of the environments in which they play.
7. Edinburgh values play as a life-enhancing experience in the home, at nursery and school and in the community.

**Article 31 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*

The Playwork Principles

These principles establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork and as such must be regarded as a whole. They describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people. They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

1. All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well being of individuals and communities.
2. Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.
3. The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
4. For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agencies.
5. The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
6. The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound and up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
7. Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.
8. Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworkers intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well being of children.

Outcomes for Edinburgh's Play Strategy

Outcome 1

Children are more active, confident, socially and emotionally resilient, and are able to experience, judge and manage risk.

Outcome 2

The importance and value of play is understood and recognised by parents and carers, staff, residents and communities city wide.

Outcome 3

Good quality and varied play places and spaces are widely available to children and young people in Edinburgh.

Outcome 4

Play experiences for children and young people are facilitated by staff who have relevant competences and training opportunities, and who adhere to the Principles of Playwork.

Policy Principles - Access to Primary School Playgrounds for Play Out of Teaching Hours

Rationale

- 1.1 The benefits of play for child development are well known and evidenced. They include improving physical activity and dexterity, developing social skills, stimulating creativity and imagination, supporting intellectual curiosity and self-led learning and helping to foster a love for the natural world and the outdoors.
- 1.2 Through play, children develop resilience and flexibility, contributing to physical and emotional wellbeing. For children playing is one of the most important aspects of their lives and schools often offer ideal space for children to play and interact with one another close to home.
- 1.3 Schools that develop their outdoor play provision commonly report improvements in behaviour, classes that settle more quickly after break time, children who are happier and more content in school and Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes that happen at playtime without active teacher input.
- 1.4 National evidence suggests that when school grounds are used by the wider community, out of teaching hours and during holidays (even on an unsupervised basis) the risk of damage and break-ins is dramatically reduced. The children and young people who regularly use the school grounds are not the ones who vandalise it; they value the provision.
- 1.5 The Scottish Government's Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision document was published in June 2013 and the Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan on 28 October 2013. The Action Plan includes consideration of options for increasing community access to school playgrounds out of school hours.
- 1.6 School buildings and their grounds often represent the largest single asset for many local communities. The primary school playground is the closest open space to the homes of many children, particularly those living in city centre tenements with no access to outdoor space.
- 1.7 The benefits of using primary school grounds for playing include:
 - Increased pupil motivation and self-esteem
 - Enhanced partnership working with the community
 - Reduced pupil disaffection
 - Improvements in child behaviour and social skills
 - Improved local availability of play opportunities
 - Better opportunities for children outside school hours
 - Opportunities which prevent children and young people progressing to greater levels of risk

Policy Principles

- 2.1 The principles for a policy for access to primary school grounds for play out of teaching hours would be:

- Children have access to the playground for freely chosen play (as opposed to community leasing of sports facilities or 'pay and play')
 - A range of options are considered, depending on the individual school and community need, including: open access; access limited by time/and or space; playground access during current leasing hours; access through a stewardship agreement
 - School gates are not locked as a default position, but consideration is given to whether they should be locked, when gates should be locked and by whom they are locked, and if they can be left open
 - When improving school grounds for play, additional costs may be incurred and must be considered by the school community when raising funds
 - Safety and risk is put into a real rather than perceived context using risk benefit assessment
- 2.2 Providing play opportunities within school grounds can be a challenge and some schools and some communities may encounter more challenges than others. Community use of school grounds is at the discretion of the head of establishment, however wherever possible primary school grounds should be made available for children's use out of school hours.
- 2.3 Where schools are already accessed by children for play out of hours playgrounds should not be locked.
- 2.4 Where the head of establishment deems it is necessary to lock the playground, wherever practically possible this should only be done when the building itself is locked. This may be done by allowing playground access during leasing hours or access through stewardship agreements.
- 2.5 Issues to be considered on an individual school basis:
- Children's views and play needs
 - What other facilities/spaces for free play are available in the community
 - What after school programme of activities is currently on offer
 - What resources are needed
 - What are the community views on noise, anti social behaviour and vandalism
 - What is the impact on community relations
 - What existing systems or community groups are already in place which could support this initiative
 - Hours of darkness in winter
 - PPP status
 - Building risk-benefit assessment into the risk management approach to open playgrounds, taking into consideration all relevant factors

Improvements to School Grounds for Play

- 3.1. Improvements to school grounds for play can benefit schools and communities.

- 3.2. Parent School Associations may wish to improve their school grounds for play, and often raise funds to do so.
- 3.3. Heads of establishment are ultimately responsible for the management of these facilities, including the installation process.
- 3.4. Heads of establishment should ensure that relevant colleagues are included in the planning process including officers from Play Development, Health and Safety, Facility Management, Estate Services, Corporate Property Maintenance, Grounds Maintenance, Insurance, PPP partners etc when considering making changes.
- 3.5. When raising funds to improve school grounds for play it is essential to factor in costs for a designer, project manager/quantity surveyor, post-installation inspection and future fund raising for repairs and maintenance as these must also be met by the school community.
- 3.6. When planning to improve grounds the community views on noise, anti social behaviour and vandalism should be taken into consideration and actively addressed.
- 3.7. Heads of establishment should take a risk benefit approach to the improvement of school grounds, and maintain a dynamic risk assessment of the facility and its use. The principle of including children in the risk assessment is important for sustainable use. The Head may nominate a lead teacher but ultimately retains the management responsibility.
- 3.8. Provision should be made for regular inspection of the facilities by school staff.
- 3.9. Loose parts*, sand areas and creative spaces have far greater impact than trim trails, slides and other commercial equipment. Play training for teachers and support staff is invaluable for a successful and sustainable project.

*Loose Parts Theory [Nicolson, 1971] uses natural and recycled materials which can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, taken apart and put back together in multiple ways, providing a rich play environment.

Examples - Grounds for Learning Playing Naturally in Schools

Castleview Primary (PPP school)



Lorne Primary City Centre



Our Place - Cramond Primary School



Before

After

