

# PlayBoard NI

## Taking Outdoor Play Seriously (TOPS)

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# PlayBoard NI

- Our Vision is of '**A society where the right to play is realised**'
- We are recognised as the lead organisation for children's play in NI
- We are membership body
- We provide expertise and guidance on Play policy formation and strategy
- We are respected by regional and local government as a critical friend
- We are a service delivery organisation
- We advocate and champion play as a means of developing physical, mental and emotional health and well-being
- We maintain a UK/International profile .





# Presentation Aim and Objectives

## **Aim:**

To provide an overview of PlayBoard's **'TOPS'** Quality Award programme for Schools

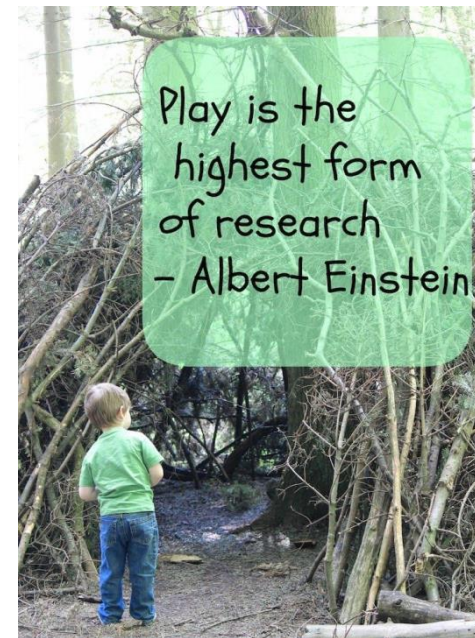
## **Objectives:**

- To provide background context
- To outline the systematic approach employed
- To explore learning to date
- To discuss next steps

# Research Informed Approach

## The benefits of play in schools are widely acknowledged:

- ❑ Ridgeway (2003) and Pellegrini et al (2004) highlight that a lack of playtime impacts negatively on children's performance in the classroom with children less attentive to tasks and higher incidences of inappropriate behaviour Fisher et al (2008) highlight that through play children acquire knowledge and practice new skills, providing a foundation for complex processes and academic success;
- ❑ Creswell *et al* (2005) highlighted role of play in schools in reducing stress and increasing self-esteem;
- ❑ Blatchford and Baines (2006) found that many schools have reduced the time available and opportunities for play;
- ❑ World Health Organisation (2007) identified playtimes as being an important opportunity to increase daily physical activity through unstructured free play;
- ❑ Fisher *et al* (2008) highlight that through play children acquire knowledge and practice new skills, providing a foundation for complex processes and academic success.



# Practice Informed Approach

- Play Quest (2006)
- Positive Playgrounds (2006)
- These initiatives established an extensive evidence base to support the need for a more robust school based programme.
- Baseline assessments highlighted that the majority of primary schools scored their play as being average or below average.
- Staff within primary schools identified concerns regarding pupil engagement in play
- PlayBoard were consistently approached by schools to remodel the play environment.



# **'TOPS' Quality Assurance Award for Outdoor Play in Schools**

## **'TOPS' Quality Assurance Award:**

- ☐ Developed a systematic process for reviewing and improving the quality of children's play experiences.
- ☐ Aims to deepen staff/playworkers knowledge and expertise in play.
- ☐ Aims to promote playwork practice and support environments in which children can play freely.
- ☐ Considers both strengths and areas for improvement whilst identifying issues that can be addressed on an individual basis.

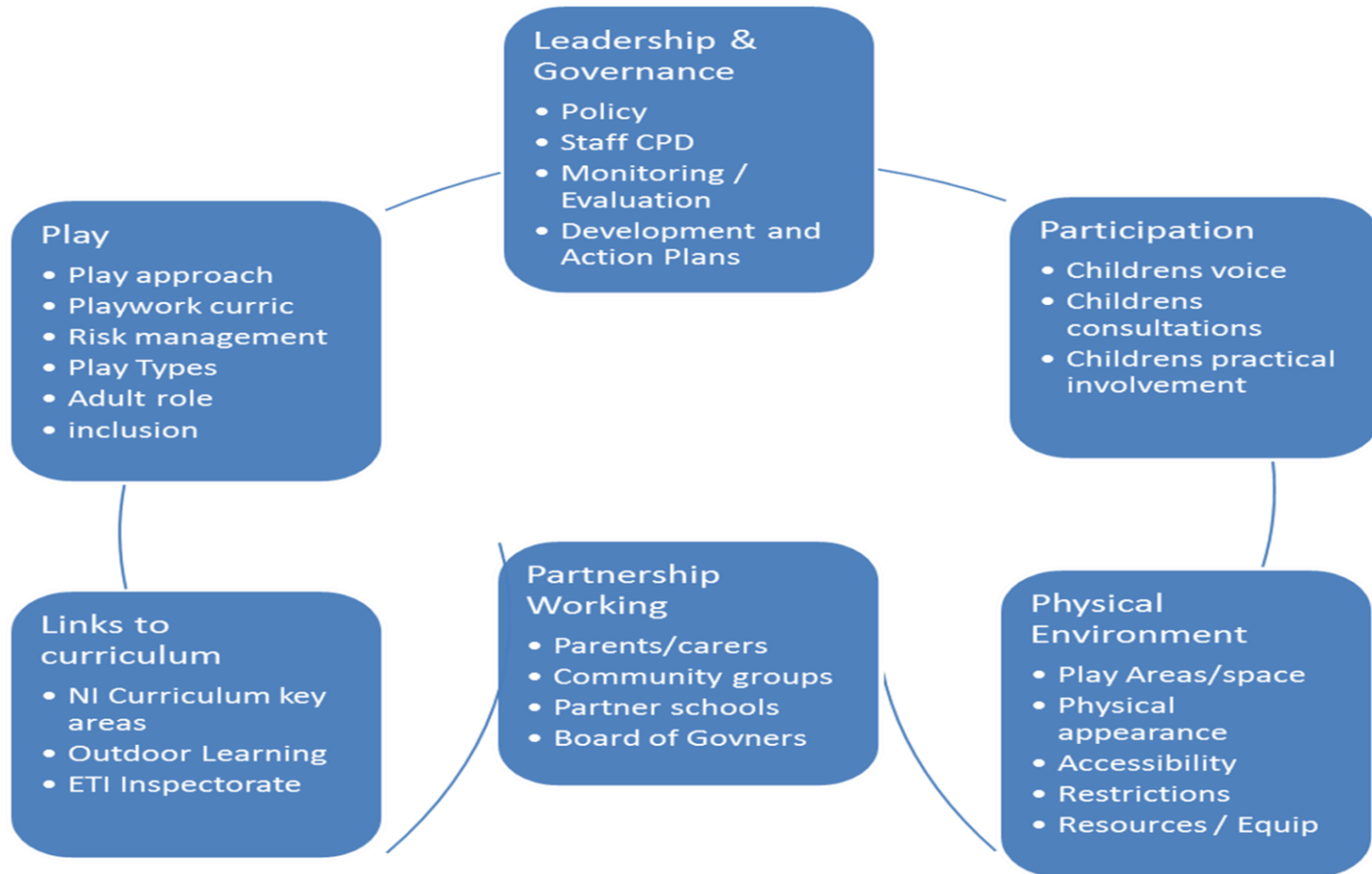


# Taking Outdoor Play Seriously

**Our vision for the 'TOPS' programme was to:**

*" To encourage and support schools to provide greater choice and variety in play opportunities and experiences through the transformation of their outdoor environment "*

# Systematic Approach





# TOPS Case Study

- Ballymacash PS is situated in County Antrim in the town of Lisburn
  - ☐ Combined urban and rural catchment
  - ☐ Total of 378 children in the PS and 52 children in the nursery unit.
  - ☐ Staff within Ballymacash PS identified concerns regarding pupil engagement in play.
  - ☐ The school Principal sought a fundamental change to the play environment and overall school culture
  - ☐ School established Play Working Group - to drive the transformation of outdoor play



# Schools Grounds Baseline



# Pupil Participation



- Pupil led process with children's views and voices at the core
- Participation sessions held with:
  - ☐ Schools Pupil Council
  - ☐ School Eco Team
- Pupils conducted surveys of their peers on play within the school grounds
- Pupils actively encouraged parental and wider community support through posters and school newsletter



# Pupil's Participation





# Pupil's Participation







# 'TOPS' Outdoor Play in Schools

## Play Working Group :

- Led the process of innovative change within the school
- Training sessions – Increase staff knowledge and expertise in play. Explored play types and mapped out activities to support broadening of play experience.
- Engaged with the pupils and parents throughout the process and developed key policies relating to support outdoor play.
- Developed seasonal outdoor play action plans for the outdoor space.
- Explored structures to transform the outdoor space including the messy kitchen, free-standing chalk boards etc.
- **Parental Involvement:** Importance of play, updated parents on the changes within the school and enabled parents to explore the outside play environment

# 'TOPS' Process

## **Environment:**

- Baseline environmental audit assessments. Baseline assessments highlighted that the PS scored their play as being average or below at beginning of training.

## **Children's Participation:**

- Playful participation sessions – project design and evaluation
- Lunchtime Enjoyment of Activity and Play questionnaire (LEAP: Hyndman et al, 2013)
- Children photographed spaces
- Direct observations

## **Staff:**

- Focus groups with the school faculty
- Evaluation forms



# Monitoring and Evaluating

## The Play Types

There are acknowledged to be a number of different play types (around 16) which provide playworkers, managers and trainers with a common language for describing play. These are now used widely, including the underpinning knowledge requirements in the Playwork Level 3 National Occupational Standards 2004.

- ✓ Symbolic Play – play which allows control, gradual exploration and increased understanding without the risk of being out of one's depth. Eg Tracks for cars + guttering
- ✓ Rough and Tumble Play – close encounter play which is less to do with fighting and more to do with touching, tickling, gauging relative strength. Discovering physical flexibility and the exhilaration of display. Tyre stacking + rolling
- ✓ Socio-dramatic Play – the enactment of real and potential experiences of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature. Small World  
- Barbies  
- Pirate tyre  
- Dinosaurs  
- Animal tyres
- ✓ Social Play – play during which the rules and criteria for social engagement and interaction can be revealed, explored and amended. - Lego / Meg  
Blacks / Dupl
- ✓ Creative Play – play which allows a new response, the transformation of information, awareness of new connections, with an element of surprise. - Stage  
- Music
- ✓ Communication Play – play using words, nuances or gestures for example, mime, jokes, play acting, mickey taking, singing, debate, poetry.
- ✓ Dramatic Play – play which dramatizes events in which the child is not a direct participant.
- Deep Play – play which allows the child to encounter risky or even potentially life threatening experiences, to develop survival skills and conquer fear.
- ✓ Exploratory Play – play to access factual information consisting of manipulative behaviours such as handling, throwing, banging or mouthing objects. - Physical
- ✓ Fantasy Play – play which rearranges the world in the child's way, a way which is unlikely to occur. - Pirates  
Dinosaur!  
Animals  
Fairy tyr
- ✓ Imaginative Play – play where the conventional rules, which govern the physical world, do not apply.
- Locomotor Play – movement in any or every direction for its own sake.
- ✓ Mastery Play – control of the physical and affective ingredients of the environments.
- Object Play – play which uses infinite and interesting sequences of hand-eye manipulations and movements.

## Evaluation of play PHASE 1

June 2015

- Kids loved that the playground / area was opened up and they now have so much space. Now less injuries / tales and lots to do.
- Storage worked well. Good that we took the time to plan where boxes and activities stored. The fact that the boxes are on wheels + labelled was good for quick tidy up. Kids doing this all themselves and loving the responsibility.
- Adult needed to monitor specific activities / resources. Remember for next term.
- Tyres - Rules important for stacking. Kids have used these to roll and make obstacle courses and, along with loose parts, have created super trucks, time machines and other brilliant inventions
- Dress up, music, all very popular. Kids would love a stage. Think about for next term. Perhaps move music tyre off grass for winter play so the children still have access.
- Management / supervision all good. Children in pupil council / Eco taking their roles very seriously!
- So far, no risk / injury with any loose parts / junk materials. Kids enjoying exploring.
- Supervisors pleased that kids are so busy with new activities + playing so well together.

# Before





# After



# After















# Impact Identified by School

- “Children love their playtimes, are never bored and are more creative in their play”.
- “We have a new muddy kitchen, they all get very messy making mudcakes, its great to see them exploring nature.”
- “Staff have felt they can let children take more risk during play, children have more freedom which means they are using their imagination more without boundaries that are unnecessary”
- “Children are playing with others from different year groups rather than just sticking with who they know”
- “Less injuries/incidents of negative behaviour on the whole”
- “Friendships strengthened and forged through mutual interests”
- “Children are engaged and learning through their play too”.
- “I am well pleased with the changes made, such a difference in playground activities and glad to see so many kids smile”



# Outcomes

## **Environment**

- Enhanced use of the outdoor space for play
- Providing children with a direct connection to the natural environment with better play opportunities

## **Pupils**

- More and better play opportunities
- Reduced levels of disruptive behaviour in playground and class
- Improved enjoyment of their playtimes

## **Staff/School**

- Increased staff understanding, confidence and skill set in providing outdoor play opportunities
- Opportunities for school to incorporate outdoor play activities into curricular teaching supporting the learning process
- Increased engagement with parents in providing play opportunities



## Peter Weir – Minister of Education

“Play is essential to a child’s development. It is how friendships are made and provides an opportunity to learn and exercise in a fun way.

“Ballymacash is a school, which with the expert support of PlayBoard, has taken a truly creative and innovative approach to enhancing learning through play. The Principal, the staff and the children should all be congratulated for how they have transformed the outdoor school environment.”

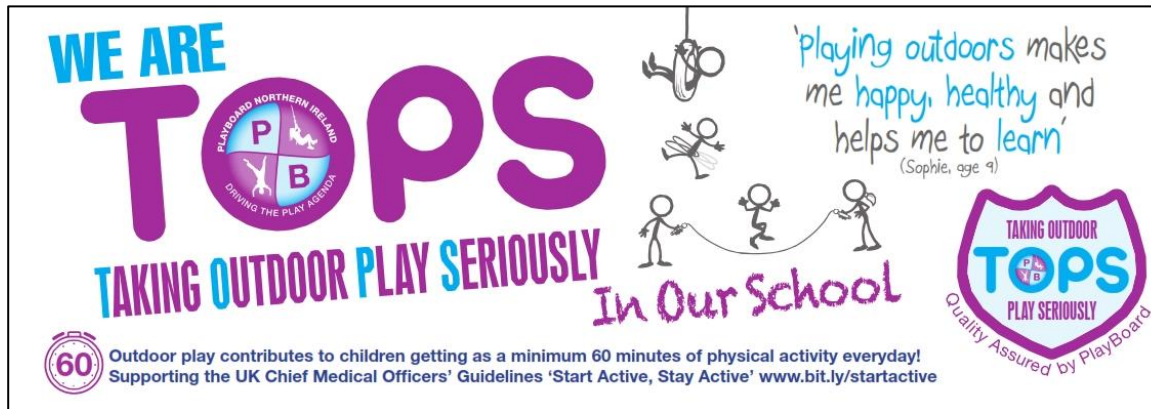






20th IPA Triennial World Conference in Calgary – September 2017

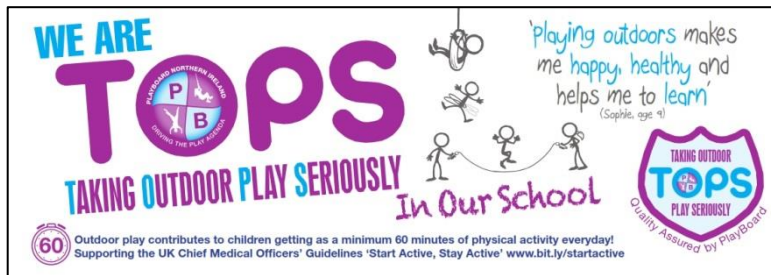
<http://www.ballymacashps.co.uk/ballymacash-receives-award-for-play-wed-15-jun-2011/>



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# Thank You

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