

# **Children's Social, Emotional and Mental Health and Wellbeing at Playtimes**

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2020

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Educational  
and Child Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities, and the School of Environment,  
Education and Development.

## Contents

Contents .....	2
Tables and Figures .....	6
List of Tables .....	6
List of Figures .....	6
Thesis abstract.....	7
Background.....	7
Methods.....	7
Analysis.....	7
Conclusions.....	8
Declaration.....	9
Copyright statement.....	10
Acknowledgements.....	11
Thesis Introduction .....	12
Introduction.....	12
Background to the Research .....	12
Aims of the Research .....	12
Researcher’s Professional Background and Relevant Personal and Professional Experience and Axiological Stance .....	13
Positioning for Data Access.....	15
Evaluation of Ontological, Epistemological and Axiological Stances .....	16
Ethical Considerations .....	17
References.....	18
Paper one: Supporting Children’s Playtime Wellbeing and Right to Play: A Literature Review .....	20
Abstract.....	20
Introduction.....	21
Children’s SEMH and Wellbeing in the United Kingdom (UK).....	21
Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing at Playtime .....	22
Method .....	24
Search Strategy .....	24
Data Classification .....	26
Configurative Analysis .....	33
Findings.....	33
Study Characteristics .....	33
Intervention .....	33

Outcome Measures.....	34
Outcomes .....	34
Key features of successful playtime approaches and interventions.....	35
Discussion.....	38
Limitations .....	41
Implications for Policy and Practice .....	42
Implications for Future Research.....	44
References.....	44
Paper two: Child-led Research Investigating Social, Emotional and Mental Health and Wellbeing Aspects of Playtime.....	51
Abstract.....	51
Introduction.....	53
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 31.....	53
Mental Health and Wellbeing Amongst UK Children.....	54
The UNCRC and Children’s Right to be Heard .....	54
Playtime Wellbeing and Children’s Right to Play.....	55
Method .....	57
Design .....	57
Sample.....	61
Co-researcher Training and Design .....	63
Child-led Research Methods.....	64
Data Analysis .....	65
Ethical Considerations .....	66
Findings.....	66
Feedback to the Stakeholder Group and Action Planning .....	72
Discussion.....	73
Children’s Perceptions of Playtime .....	73
Involvement of Children in the Research .....	75
Limitations and Areas of Future Research.....	75
Implications of the Research Findings.....	77
References.....	79
Paper 3: The Dissemination of Evidence to Professional Practice .....	87
Introduction.....	87
Section A: Evidence Based Practice and Practice-Based Evidence .....	87
Evidence Based Practice .....	87

Practice Based Evidence .....	89
Evidence Based Practice and this Research .....	90
Section B: Dissemination of Research .....	90
Section C: Research Implications of Papers One and Two .....	93
Implications for the Research Site .....	93
Implications at the Organisational Level .....	93
Implications of the Research at a Professional Level .....	94
Section D: Strategy for Dissemination and Measuring Impact .....	95
Dissemination for Awareness, Understanding and Action .....	96
Evaluation of Impact .....	101
References .....	103
Appendices .....	106
Appendix A: Ethical approval letter .....	106
Appendix B: Amendments ethical approval email .....	108
Appendix C: Paper two consent form .....	109
Appendix D: Paper two child co-researcher assent sheet .....	111
Appendix E: Paper two child participant assent sheet .....	112
Appendix F: Author guidelines for the DECP .....	112
Appendix G: Paper one list of excluded studies and reasons .....	116
Appendix H: Paper one weights of evidence .....	125
Appendix I: Paper two focus group questions .....	127
Appendix J: Paper two focus group script and rules .....	128
Appendix K: Paper two observation sheet .....	130
Appendix L: Presentation to stakeholders .....	131
Appendix M: Action plan for paper two research site .....	134
Appendix N: Paper two opt out letter .....	135
Appendix O: Paper two participatory collaborative data analysis .....	137
Appendix P: Call for papers .....	141
Appendix Q: Co-authoring the DECP position statement (Hobbs et al., 2019) .....	142
Appendix R: Article in the 'Play for Wales' magazine outlining paper two .....	148
Appendix S: Workshop outlining paper two delivered at the DECP conference January 2020 .....	151
Appendix T: Ethical Review Management System form .....	153
Appendix U: Paper two parent/Carer information sheet (child co-researchers) .....	159
Appendix V: Paper two parent/Carer information sheet (child participants) .....	163

Appendix W Paper two child information sheet..... 166

Word count: 22,687 (excluding declaration, copyright statement, acknowledgements and appendices)

## Tables and Figures

### List of Tables

		Page
Table 1	Characteristics of included studies	27
Table 2	A model for playtime provision informed by the findings from paper one	46
Table 3	RADIO phases and related research activities	60
Table 4	Participants who took part in the focus group	64
Table 5	Child co-researcher training	65
Table 6	A model of playtime provision informed by the findings from paper two	82

### List of Figures

		Page
Figure 1	PRISMA flowchart (Moher et al., 2009)	25
Figure 2	A thematic map illustrating theme and sub-themes	38
Figure 3	Process for generating focus group questions	66
Figure 4	Paper two theme: Having someone to play with	68
Figure 5	Paper two theme: Games	69
Figure 6	Paper two theme: Playtimes	70
Figure 7	Paper two themes: How people treat each other	71
Figure 8	Paper two: The links and interactions made between themes and sub-themes	72

# **Thesis abstract**

## **Background**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child outline children's right to play as a fundamental human right. The importance of play at playtimes in schools is suggested to be poorly recognised and prioritised.

## **Methods**

A systematic literature review (SLR) aimed to identify features of school playtime provision which support children's social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and wellbeing and promote their right to play. The second paper aimed to investigate SEMH and wellbeing aspects of playtime through child-led participatory action research. The child co-researchers were supported to design and facilitate data collection and collaborative thematic data analysis.

## **Analysis**

The SLR identified 11 'best evidence' studies; this paper drew out features of successful playtime approaches/interventions relating to children's SEMH/wellbeing at playtimes. The empirical research paper identified five main themes from analysis: the availability and nature of games, having someone to play with, how people treat each other, the importance of playtimes and views of the playtime rules. This research highlights interactions between the themes as important.

## **Conclusions**

The SLR suggests that there is a dearth of research evaluating approaches to supporting children's SEMH, wellbeing and right to play at playtime that have a more contemporary view of play; with current studies having a greater focus upon social control and adherence to rules set by adults. The empirical study highlights the importance of holistic playtime provision and illustrates that with appropriate training and support, children were able to effectively engage in research investigating playtime. This research has been disseminated in the following ways: with the child co-researchers at the research site, through a magazine article, as a workshop at the Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) conference and towards the DECP position paper on children's right to play. A further dissemination strategy has been outlined.

**Key words:** play, recess, playtime, participation, wellbeing



## **Declaration**

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to say a huge thank you to my tutor Cathy Atkinson. Her patience, wisdom and supportive approach have made this thesis possible.

My thanks goes to the educational psychologist colleague who helped to recruit the school and the key member of staff who championed the project in paper two; I am very grateful. A special thank you goes to the four child co-researchers who were simply incredible. You demonstrated to me that when given the skills you can research playtimes with competence and insight. I hope that this thesis spreads your voices wide and far to promote children's right to play at playtimes. Thank you to the school and all of the staff and children who took part in this research.

A massive thank you goes to my mother, Kay, for championing me on every bit of the way and always having my back.

Thank you to my partner Dave for his support and for listening to endless conversations about play. Thank you to my father Owen, my sister Katie and my brother Richard and all of my great friends and extended family for their encouragement and support.

I would also like to thank my placement supervisor Christine Williams for her encouragement, support and kindness.

A final thankyou goes to my fellow trainee educational psychologists for their friendship and support; particularly to the pub club ladies.

# **Thesis Introduction**

## **Introduction**

This thesis consists of three linked papers. Paper one describes an investigation into supporting children's playtime wellbeing and right to play through completing a systematic literature review. Paper two describes a piece of child-led empirical research investigating social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing aspects of playtime. Paper three considers the findings and implications of papers one and two, and details how these were disseminated.

## **Background to the Research**

The impetus of this research is to promote children's right to play at playtimes in school. Through Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) it is internationally acknowledged that children have the right to play and to join in a wide range of activities. Children's right to play is an area of increasing interest to educational psychologists and has recently been promoted through the publication of position statements from the Division of Educational and Child Psychology's (DECP) (Hobbs et al., 2019) and the Children's Play Policy Forum (CPPF, 2019).

## **Aims of the Research**

The overarching aspiration of this thesis was to provide educational psychologists and school staff with an understanding, from the perspectives of children, of what is important at playtimes for children's social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing; and to consider the available best evidence for effective playtime interventions and approaches.

The systematic literature review in paper one aimed to answer the research question: What are the features of school playtime provision which support children's social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and wellbeing and promote their right to play? This paper aimed to provide schools with the key features from the best available evidence of playtime interventions and approaches focusing upon children's social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and wellbeing that they could consider these within the context of their own setting.

Paper two aimed to answer the research question: How can child-led research help elicit children's perspectives on how their playtime experience impacts on their SEMH and wellbeing? The finding from paper one that many of the interventions and approaches lacked pupil voice informed the decision to facilitate child-led research and to train children as co-researchers in paper two, the empirical study. Paper two aimed to provide a greater understanding from a child's perspective of key elements of playtimes that are important for their SEMH and wellbeing. This approach could potentially enable other schools to follow a similar process to investigate their playtime provision or use the findings from paper two to inform their understanding of playtimes.

## **Researcher's Professional Background and Relevant Personal and Professional Experience and Axiological Stance**

The researcher, who is also the author of these papers, conducted the research whilst in the role of a trainee educational psychologist (TEP) based in a local authority educational psychology service. The researcher was drawn to this area of research due to her past roles, the current concerns around children's mental health and wellbeing and an interest in promoting children's rights and particularly their right to play. In response to increasing concern that governments were not acknowledging children's right to play due to a range of social, economic and cultural factors, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the

Child (UNCRC, 2013) published General Comment 17, which provided detailed measures for governments to ensure implementation of children's Article 31 rights. Notably, as a secondary school teacher the researcher felt that many of the behaviour and learning difficulties observed were the consequence of young people not having previously learned skills such as turn taking, social problem solving and knowing how to play with others. Play has been widely documented within the literature as being crucial to the development of such skills (Lester & Russell, 2008). In the researcher's experience as a teacher, children would often experience peer difficulties at playtimes, including physical fights and these difficulties would often encroach into lesson time and need to be mediated by teachers, putting even greater pressure on delivering the curriculum. As a teacher the researcher experienced many children expressing that they felt like they did not have any friends and therefore did not want to go out with the other children at playtime. Additionally, the researcher has worked in schools in which playtimes have been significantly reduced with the rationale that behaviour in lessons will improve and/or children have been removed from playtime due to their 'behaviour'. Despite its significance in Article 31, the importance of break time in United Kingdom (UK) schools has not been recognised and is often not prioritised by schools (Baines & Blatchford, 2019).

A researcher's values and beliefs, in relation to axiology, influences their view. The researcher's previous experience as a teacher had showed her the importance of positive playtimes for children's wellbeing in feeling a sense of belonging at school in connecting with peers, experiencing a positive break from learning and enjoyment and being able to focus on their work in coming back into lessons. The researcher also felt that playtimes are often a part of the school day that schools typically find difficult to know what intervention or approaches to put into place.

### ***Rationale for engagement***

In terms of defining the researcher's rationale for engagement, the topic was initially proposed by tutors from the researcher's course in collaboration with the play lead from the Wrexham Play Development Team. During a preliminary study (Bristow, 2018) the researcher worked alongside the play lead from the Wrexham Play Development Team to explore children's views of their play experiences in one small, rural school. The study used an exploratory qualitative design to answer the following two research questions: *What are children's experiences of play at school? How would children as researchers investigate other children's experiences of play at school?* Thematic analysis was used to draw out main themes. The main findings highlighted: reasons why play is fun and enjoyable, the spaces and facilities for free play, fairness and inclusivity in play, permission in play and the methods that children would use to investigate other children's experiences of play at school. This preliminary study also highlighted that children's and adults' views of play often differ in perspective. Article 12 of the UNCRC (1989), the right to be heard on matters relating to them and children's and adults' differing perspectives on play (Glenn et al., 2012) formed the rationale for facilitating children as co-researchers within research presented in this thesis (see paper two). Within the preliminary study, a key finding was that children felt strongly that it was important to have someone to play with and to be treated fairly at playtime; highlighting the presence of emotional factors within playtime at school. This led the researcher to consider how emotions at playtime can impact upon children's well-being leading to the idea for paper one, two and three of this research.

### **Positioning for Data Access**

Paper two, the empirical action research project, was facilitated in a primary school with children between Year one and Year five (age five to 10 years) in the North West of England.

As a TEP, the researcher was able to ask her educational psychologist (EP) colleagues if they were aware of a school where staff had expressed that they would like some support around their playtimes. An EP colleague was aware of such a school and asked if they were interested in meeting with the researcher to discuss being involved in the research. Following an initial meeting, school staff said that they would like to be involved (by passing their contact details on via the EP colleague), providing an *invitation to act*, in keeping with the process of action research following the Research and Development in Organisations Approach (RADIO) model.

### **Evaluation of Ontological, Epistemological and Axiological Stances**

A researcher's views in relation to ontology, epistemology, and axiology have an influence on their approach to research. The epistemological position that the researcher felt most aligned to is that of critical realism. A critical realist perspective is of value and fits well to qualitative research (Maxwell, 2012). Maxwell (2012) argues that critical realism is a combination of a belief that all knowledge is constructed from a specific position, meaning that an objective view cannot be reached (constructivist epistemology), whilst acknowledging that the world exists independent of constructions of meaning/views (realist ontology). This position fits well with the research described in paper two as it allows for an acknowledgement that the children will also have had individual experiences at playtimes and these individual experiences will have influenced their own thoughts, beliefs and attitudes about how to investigate the play of others; therefore, participants' perceptions might be subjective. However, the children received 'researcher training' which is likely to have influenced their views on data gathering. However, themes can also be identified which may be used to inform an understanding of school playtimes in other settings and contexts. The



researcher feels that it is important to empower others in research; this axiological position is likely to have influenced the research method and design.

Whilst recognising that children had their own subjective experiences of playtimes, essentially this research was aimed at finding some form of collective truth which could influence how a school might move forward in thinking about its playtimes and therefore aligning most closely to a critical realist perspective.

## **Ethical Considerations**

This research followed the Ethical Practice Policy and Guidance set by the Manchester Institute of Education (University of Manchester, 2014), the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC, 2016) guidance on conduct and the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2006) Code of Ethics and Conduct. Paper two was approved following ethical review and deemed as medium risk, as it was felt that participants may have wanted to talk about some emotive topics related to playtimes (e.g. bullying) (appendix A). The child co-researchers received guidance for this event, the researcher and staff from the school were available to withdraw any child and take appropriate action if needed. Due to the action research design, the researcher made amendments to the ethical approval once the research design had been agreed by the child co-researchers and the stakeholder team (appendix B).

The researcher ensured that informed consent from the parents/carers, informed consent from the relevant school staff and assent from the children was obtained before the research began (appendix C/D/E). The researcher ensured that all participants and the person with parental consent understood the research aims and process, the bounds of confidentiality, and their right to withdraw. The researcher worked in the best interests of the children and tried to create a safe environment in which children and the research stakeholder team felt comfortable in contributing. As discussed in paper two, the researcher took the necessary

safeguarding measures and actions to care and respond to children reporting sub-optimal play experiences.

Due to the nature of this research, the researcher was careful in managing the children's expectations about the legacy of the research and its perceived impact. The researcher feels an ethical responsibility to disseminate the findings in promoting children's voice and their right to play at playtimes.

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<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=22801>

# **Paper one: Supporting Children’s Playtime Wellbeing and Right to Play: A Literature Review**

Prepared for in accordance with author guidelines for submission to the Journal of Educational and Child Psychology (Appendix F)

## **Abstract**

**Aim:** This systematic literature review (SLR) aimed to identify features of school playtime provision which support children’s social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and wellbeing and promote their right to play.

**Method:** Drawing on SLR methodology, this paper drew out features of successful playtime approaches/interventions relating to children’s SEMH/wellbeing at playtimes.

**Findings:** Eleven studies were classified as ‘best evidence’ and included in the final synthesis. Identified elements of the approaches included skill development, playtime ethos; sense of belonging, and the linking of whole school and playtime practices.

**Limitations:** Only universal provision or interventions were included. Many of the studies used a behaviourist approach which arguably lags behind contemporary thinking.

**Conclusions:** The majority of the papers in this review focused upon social control and adherence to rules set by adults. This suggests a dearth of research evaluating approaches to supporting children’s SEMH, wellbeing and right to play at playtime with a more contemporary view of play. Next steps and research implications are discussed.

**Key words:** play, recess, playtime, intervention, wellbeing

## **Introduction**

### **Children's SEMH and Wellbeing in the United Kingdom (UK)**

There is an increasing UK focus on SEMH and wellbeing, and the supportive role that schools can play (Department of Health [DoH] & Department for Education [DfE], 2017; Weare, 2015). The impetus for this might be the recent poor performance of the UK compared to other similar countries in measures of wellbeing (UNICEF, 2013) and school wellbeing (Children's Society, 2015); and recent research suggesting around 12% of children and young people experience significant mental health difficulties receiving at least one clinical diagnosis (National Health Service [NHS], 2018).

A recent UK green paper highlighted the role schools have in addressing children and young people's mental health and the need for whole school wellbeing programmes (DoH & DfE, 2017). In the UK the term social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) is a relatively recent one (DfE & DoH, 2015) and replaced the term behaviour, social and emotional difficulties (BESD) (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2004; Norwich & Eaton, 2015) and emotional behaviour difficulties (EBD) (DfES, 2001). EBD was originally used to define "a range of difficulties that children might experience as a result of adverse experiences in the early years, difficult family relationships or ineffective behaviour management or means of engaging children effectively within the school" (DfES, 2001, p. 2). The special educational needs and disability code of practice (DfE & DoH, 2015) offers a not dissimilar definition (p. 87) with descriptors not changing significantly (Childerhouse, 2017), although use of the term SEMH has arguably increased the focus on schools' role in supporting mental health (DoH & DfE, 2017; DfE, 2018).

The rationale for schools' central role includes arguments that after a child's family, schools are the primary developmental context (Vostanis, Humphrey, Fitzgerald, Deighton & Wolpert, 2013) and that children's mental health, wellbeing and learning are inter-related

(Panayiotou & Humphrey, 2018). However, while the DoH and DfE (2017) report detailed an ambitious strategy for improving school-based mental health support, it was criticised by the House of Commons Education and Health and Social Care Committee (2018), which implored a greater focus on early prevention and intervention.

A longitudinal study investigating children's wellbeing concluded that early school-based programmes can have long-term effects upon wellbeing (Reynolds et al., 2007) and that policies aimed at improving children's wellbeing may need to be separate from those aimed at promoting academic performance (Gibbons & Silva, 2011). Vostanis et al. (2013) found, via a survey of UK schools, that although two-thirds put whole school wellbeing interventions in place, these were largely reactive, rather than preventative.

### **Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing at Playtime**

Play has been extensively documented as being important to children's emotional, social, physical and academic health and wellbeing (Lester & Russell, 2010). Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989, p.10) posits: "State parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts". The Committee on the Rights of the Child developed General Comment No. 17 to provide a contemporary view of play and explain to governments the meaning and importance of Article 31 (UNCRC, 2013). The importance of children accessing their right to play for healthy social and emotional development has been recognised widely through publications such as the Children's Play Policy Forum (CPPF, 2019) and Division of Education and Child Psychology (DECP) position statement (Hobbs et al., 2019). However, the importance of playtime in UK schools is often not recognised or prioritised by schools

(Pellegrini et al., 2002). Notably there has been a large reduction in the duration of school playtimes across schools in England since 1995 (Baines & Blatchford, 2019).

Playtime is an opportunity for children to socialise and play with friends and peers when they can interact freely (McNamara et al., 2018). For some children this may be their only opportunity outside of school to do so, as research suggests that play at home is decreasing due to safety concerns of children playing outside, media and the over-scheduling of children's lives (Lewis, 2017). It is also a critical time for providing opportunities to support children's physical and mental health (McNamara et al., 2017).

Despite the purported benefits of playtime, concerns about children's playtime behaviour have been frequently documented (Blatchford & Baines, 2006) with challenges including children experiencing social conflict, feeling left out and being bullied and victimised (McNamara et al., 2018; Vaillancourt et al., 2010). Schools typically use measures to protect children, including adult supervision, rules with accompanying sanctions and rewards, and making playtimes shorter (Lewis, 2017; Pearson & Howe, 2017). Recent research has explored the role of different factors in promoting children's SEMH and wellbeing at school and playtime. Amongst these are peer relationships, which mediate the development of children's social and emotional skills, including emotional regulation, empathy, finding solutions to social problems and developing effective coping strategies (Schmidt & Bagwell, 2011); which in turn support physical and mental long-term health outcomes (Eisenberger & Cole, 2012). A positive sense of peer connectedness at school was linked to a stronger sense of wellbeing and resilience for young people (Aldridge et al., 2016).

Loneliness is increasingly becoming recognised as a problem that can affect children's long-term mental health and social development (Hawkey & Cacioppo, 2010). A lack of connection with, or low trust in peers, peer rejection and social behaviours are correlates of loneliness for children (Qualter et al., 2013). Berguno et al. (2004) found children's reports of

loneliness were often confined to playtime and involved descriptions of being left out of play and losing friends. Bullying is another concern for schools internationally, often occurring at playtimes (Vaillancourt et al., 2010). Being bullied can have both short-term and long-term negative effects including: mental health difficulties, sadness, feelings of low worth or self-esteem, psychosomatic difficulties, suicide and physical illness (Arseneault, 2018; Ttofi et al., 2011). Negative social experiences can lead to loneliness, isolation, exclusion and difficulties with social skills (McNamara et al., 2015) and children who have lower levels of school belonging and connectedness are significantly more likely to bully and be involved in peer victimization (You et al., 2008).

This paper aims to contribute to an understanding of what schools can do to promote children's SEMH and wellbeing and children's right to play at playtimes through identifying key features of successful playtime approaches and interventions. This paper aims to identify the utility of interventions or approaches for children's SEMH and wellbeing at playtimes (rather than the effectiveness of the interventions).

## **Method**

### **Search Strategy**

The current literature review used a systematic and rigorous search strategy informed by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) (Moher et al., 2009) illustrating the number of articles at each stage of the review (Figure 1).



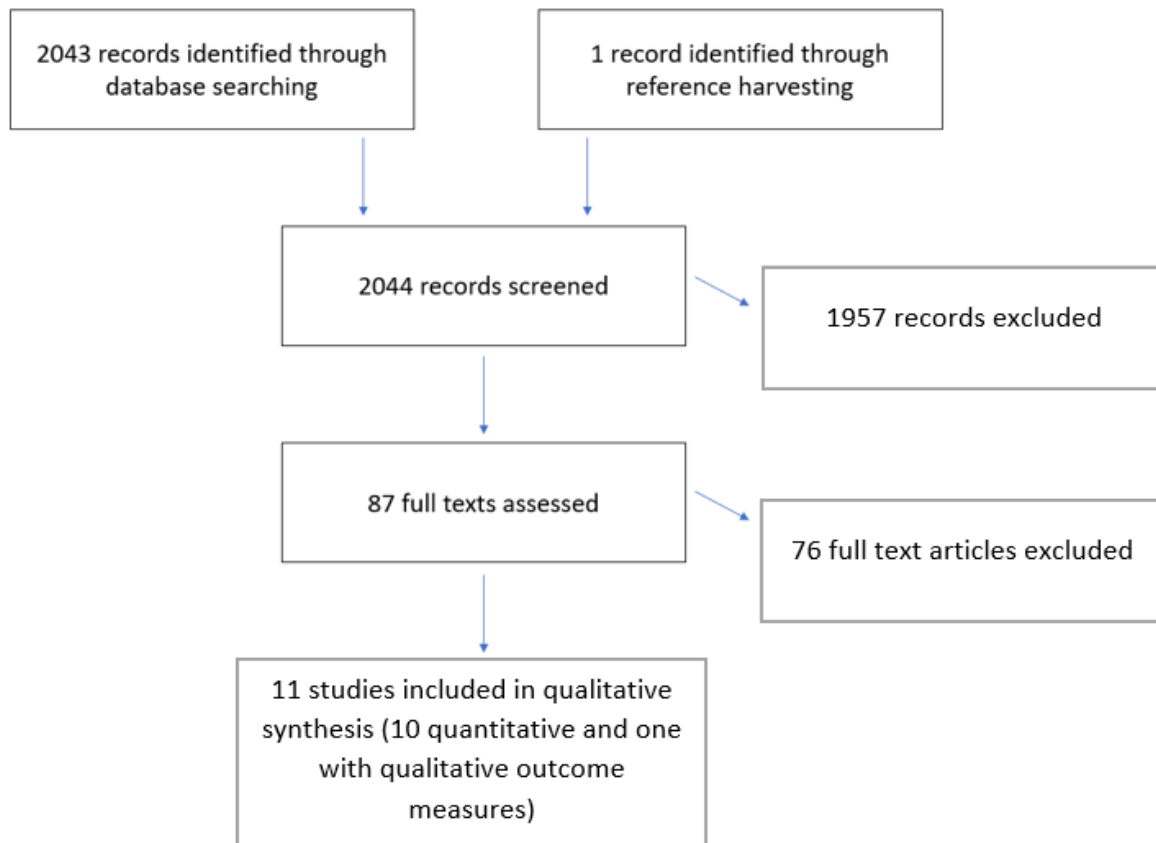


Figure 1: PRISMA Flowchart (Moher et al., 2009)

The systematic search of the literature was conducted between July and December 2018 using the following databases: Psychinfo, Social sciences (EBSCO), ASSIA (ProQuest) and ERIC (ProQuest). Article reference lists and the first ten pages of Google Scholar were manually searched. Article abstracts were searched using the following search terms: ‘playground’, ‘recess’, ‘breaktime’, ‘playtime’ and ‘school’ or ‘educational setting’. Initial scoping searches revealed numerous studies promoting physical health/physical activity promotion and for this reason, ‘physical’ was used as exclusionary term to ensure studies focused on psychological rather than physiological wellbeing. The term ‘wellbeing’ (and ‘or synonyms’) was included in a scoping search; but it was found that few relevant and too many non-relevant papers were produced when the term was included. ‘Effectiveness’ and its synonyms were not included, as the focus of this paper is on the utility of the interventions. Other search terms were considered carefully due to their potential cultural specificity, e.g.

recess was included as a synonym for playtimes, because it is more commonly used outside of the United Kingdom.

Notably, a large number of the studies focused on psychological factors used methods aimed at improving playground behaviour. This perhaps reflects that the aforementioned redefinition of EBD/BESD to SEMH is relatively recent (DfE, 2015). As a result, searches yielded little published research relating specifically to evaluating SEMH/wellbeing playtime interventions, and arguably many of the papers located were published at a time when SEMH was conceptualised differently. Implications of this will be explored later in the paper.

Inclusion criteria were devised and all included studies met the following criteria:

(1) children receiving the intervention were of primary/elementary school age (4-12 years inclusive); (2) intervention took place within a school or educational setting; (3) research had a SEMH or wellbeing focus; (4) evaluated a SEMH or wellbeing playtime intervention; (5) the intervention was universal and delivered to a whole school/ playtime/ year group (or a minimum of 20 children); (6) written in English; (7) published between 2000 and 2018; (8) subjected to peer review in an academic journal (appendix G).

## **Data Classification**

Fourteen papers that met the inclusion criteria were rated high, medium or low in terms of quality, methodological appropriateness and focus (Gough, 2007) according to predetermined criteria. Inter-rater checking was adopted to increase validity of scoring. Following this process, three studies were excluded for low overall weight of evidence (Todd et al., 2002; Visser & Greenwood, 2005; Ziv & Dolev, 2013), leaving 11 best evidence studies (appendix H). Included studies are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of included studies

Author/ year	Country	Aim/ focus	Sample	Interventio n/ approach	Follow up	Data collection/ methods	Data analysis	Deliverers	Findings/ Outcomes	Overall WoE
Anderson- Butcher et al. (2003)	USA	To decrease problem behaviours at recess	Approx. 462 students 6-12 years	Volunteers provided activities and games that emphasised the social skills the volunteers had been trained to encourage		Observational checklist of 12 problem behaviour/ the number of recess supervisors were monitored/ children's school attendance	A reversal replication design: Mean and SD given for baseline and intervention phases	University student volunteers (number not specified)	The number of problem behaviours was lower during intervention than baseline after controlling for the number of recess supervisors	M
Edwards (2006)	UK	To reduce negative playground incidents and increase wellbeing	Two schools (reception to Y6)	Changing the physical space of the playground		Questionnaire feedback	Summarises findings but with no qualitative analysis	A steering group – city council, Health promoting school's team, school staff	Study suggests improvements. Little evaluation data provided	M
Farmer et al. (2017)	New Zealand	The effect of playtime changes on bullying	Eight control schools and eight intervention schools	Schools increased opportunities for risk and challenge, reduced rules and provided loose parts play	2 year follow up	Children, parents and teachers completed bullying questionnaires	Data were analysed according to Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trails (CONSORT) extended for	Researchers	Intervention children reported higher odds of being happier at school and playing more with other children than children at control schools.	M

							cluster randomised trials		Intervention children reported being pushed more but reporting to teachers less. Teachers but not children reported more bullying intervention schools in year 1	
Franzen & Kamps (2008)	USA	To reduce 5 'inappropriate behaviours' on the playground and the rate of active supervision	180 children 6-9 years and 10 teachers	A recess intervention to teach recess-related behaviours to students and using group contingencies to reinforce appropriate student behaviours within the context of school-wide positive behaviour support (SwPBS)	Over 2 school years	Observation of the frequency of children's target behaviours, teacher's active supervision and reprimands	Mean and Standard Deviation of inappropriate behaviour at baseline and during the intervention and frequency of active supervision	School staff received training	Results indicated decreases in disruptive behaviours across three grade levels and increases in active teacher supervision	M
Frey et al. (2005)	USA	To reduce bullying and destructive bystander behaviour,	620 children (6 schools) 8-12 years	Use of the 'steps to respect' program. Comprises of	1 year follow up	Teacher ratings of peer interaction skills	Exploratory factor analysis	School staff received training prior to delivering	Results indicate declines in bullying and argumentative behaviour among	H

		increase pro-social beliefs related to bullying and increasing social-emotional skills		staff training and classroom lessons (on social emotional skills, emotional regulation and the recognising, refusing and reporting of bullying behaviour)		Student survey of beliefs and behaviour Observational coding of behaviour linked to bullying		the intervention	intervention group children relative to control group children	
Griffin et al. (2017)	USA	To help socially withdrawn students to decrease social isolation behaviour	388 children (2 schools) 4-12 years	Put buddy benches on the playground, teachers instructed children on how to use them		Treatment fidelity data, the number of students engaged in solitary behaviours and social validity surveys	Percentages, averages and TAU-U	School staff	Solitary behaviour decreased from 24% to 19%	M
Leff, Costigan & Power (2004)	USA	To decrease aggression and promote cooperative play at playtime	750 children 5-10 years	The playground was divided into 5 sections with age and gender activities designed for use within each section		Observational coding scheme created: play behaviours (cooperative play and rough and tumble play), aggressive behaviour (physical,	Percentages and Cohens K statistics, chi-square tests	Each activity was supervised by school staff and parents who volunteered. 5 university based research team were	Organised activities were associated with a three times higher rate of cooperative play; that is when there was no organised game present, cooperative play only occurred in	M

				in which children could choose freely to engage with. Whole school assembly explaining the school rules and providing a hands-on demonstration of each activity in the playground		relational and verbal), intercultural interactions and contextual factors (i.e. presence of an organised activity, presence of an adult actively supervising children)		trained in the observational system	25.8% of the observation intervals but when organised play was used, cooperative play occurred during 77.9% of the intervals. Analyses indicate that the association between cooperative play and organised games was much stronger than the association between cooperative play and adult supervision	
Lewis et al. (2000)	USA	To reduce the rate of problem behaviour on the playground	475 pupils from one primary school (kindergarten through to 5 <sup>th</sup> grade)	Positive Behaviour Support Strategies. Three school-wide strategies; review of key social skills, pre-correction prompting the use of key		Frequency of pre-correction and active supervision	Multiple baseline design	School staff deliver the intervention	Results indicated that the intervention reduced rates of problem behaviour at recess but was not effective in increasing rates of active supervision by the playground monitors	M

				social skills and active playground supervision						
Lewis et al. (2002)	USA	To reduce problem behaviours on the playground	450 children 5-12 years	The use of Positive Behaviour Support early intervention strategies on the rate of problem behaviour during recess. The direct teaching of playground-related behaviours (teaching rules, routines and desired behaviour) and the use of group contingency		Frequency of 6 problem behaviours	Percentages, mean and range	School staff delivered the intervention	Results indicated that the intervention reduced the frequency of problem behaviours across three recess periods	M
Low, Frey & Brockman (2010)	USA	To reduce observed malicious gossip on the playground	544 children (6 schools) 8-12 years	Steps to respect program: a bullying prevention programme. Changes to policy, staff	1 year intervention	Observations of student's playground behaviour by research assistants and a survey of student's beliefs	Hierarchical mixed models	School staff after receiving training	Results indicate support for the program on reducing relational aggression	H

				training, classroom lessons for the children for 10 weeks focusing on skill development and rule clarification						
Teerlink, Caldarella, Anderson, Richardson & Guzman (2017)	USA	To reduce problem behaviour on the playground	462 children 6-12 years	Children were given peer praise notes for showing the playground expectations. These were then entered into a school wide drawing for prizes		The frequency of playground ODRs and social validity surveys	Percentages, averages and variability	School staff and children	Results from social validity surveys completed by recess aides and students indicated participants' perceptions that PPNs helped improve student behaviour and peer relations, communicate playground rules, extend supervision responsibilities and offer structured activity to peer praisers	M

Notes: M=Medium; H=High; PPNs=Pupil praise notes; ODRs=Office discipline referrals



## **Configurative Analysis**

In line with the research aim, to establish the key features of successful playtime approaches and interventions, a configurative thematic synthesis was used. This involved three main stages: inductively coding the text, developing descriptive themes, and generating analytical themes with the purpose of remaining close to the findings from the best evidence studies to create novel interpretative constructs (Harden & Thomas, 2008). Initial codes were grouped and regrouped to create sub-themes, and then themes.

## **Findings**

### **Study Characteristics**

#### *Sample*

Study sample sizes ranged from 56 to 1215 (where specified). The majority (nine) were based in United States (US) elementary schools, with the others in UK and New Zealand primary schools. Across the 11 studies, playtime interventions were delivered by teachers, para-professionals, playtime supervisors, university student volunteers, a council steering group, and school children.

### **Intervention**

Two studies used ‘Positive Behaviour Support’ strategies at playtime (Leff et al. 2004; Lewis et al. 2002), with two high-rated studies using the manualised ‘Steps to Respect Bullying Prevention Program’ (Frey et al. 2005; Low et al. 2010). All other studies used a bespoke intervention with some containing identifiable, but not manualised, interventions (e.g. loose parts play/ buddy bench). Training was mentioned for school staff in four studies for volunteers in one and for children in one.

## **Outcome Measures**

All papers suggest that their study was successful to some degree. A variety of outcome measures were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the approach/intervention in the included studies. These included observational coding of playtime behaviours (10 studies), child (seven), staff (three) and parent (one) questionnaires, 'office discipline referrals' (one) and teacher behaviour rating scales (two studies). The majority of the outcome measures were designed for the purpose of the intervention; however, some used measures with known validity and reliability.

Two studies used two outcome measures, two used three and one used four. All other studies used only one. Six studies using observation coding as their only outcome measure.

## **Outcomes**

Low et al (2010) suggest that the outcome of their research was a reduction in relational aggression between children, whilst Frey et al (2005) reported outcomes including enhanced child bystander responsibility/less acceptance of aggression/bullying and greater perceived adult responsiveness to aggression/bullying, Griffin et al (2017) reported that the number of children engaged in solitary behaviour decreased. Edwards (2006) stated "two of the three schools made considerable improvements to their grounds. These enabled children to feel prouder of their playground and to feel greater happiness at break times" (p. 23). Teerlink et al (2017) suggest that the outcomes for the intervention included improving student behaviour and peer relations. Farmer et al (2017) stated that intervention children reported being happier and playing with more children, despite reporting that they pushed each other more and teachers noticing more bullying at playtimes in Year 1 (aged 5-6). Leff et al (2004) contended that providing organised games at playtime increased the rates of cooperative play,

reduced ‘rough physical play’ and increased interactions between children from different ethnic backgrounds.

The remaining papers described a reduction in the frequency of ‘problem’/ ‘disruptive’ behaviours (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2003; Franzen & Kamps, 2008; Lewis et al., 2002; Lewis et al., 2000), e.g. hitting, name calling, kicking, misuse of equipment. However, notably across the studies examples of ‘problem behaviours’ were given that could be perceived as play behaviours, e.g. ‘dancing’, ‘playing with rocks’, ‘making noises’, ‘rolling or lying on the ground’, ‘wrestling’, ‘jumping off the top of a play structure’.

### Key features of successful playtime approaches and interventions

From the configurative analysis, four main themes were identified under an overarching theme of holistic playtime provision: children’s skill development; playtime ethos; children’s sense of belonging at playtimes; and the linking of whole school and playtime systems. These are shown in Figure 2 and described in more detail below. Sub-themes are highlighted in italics>.

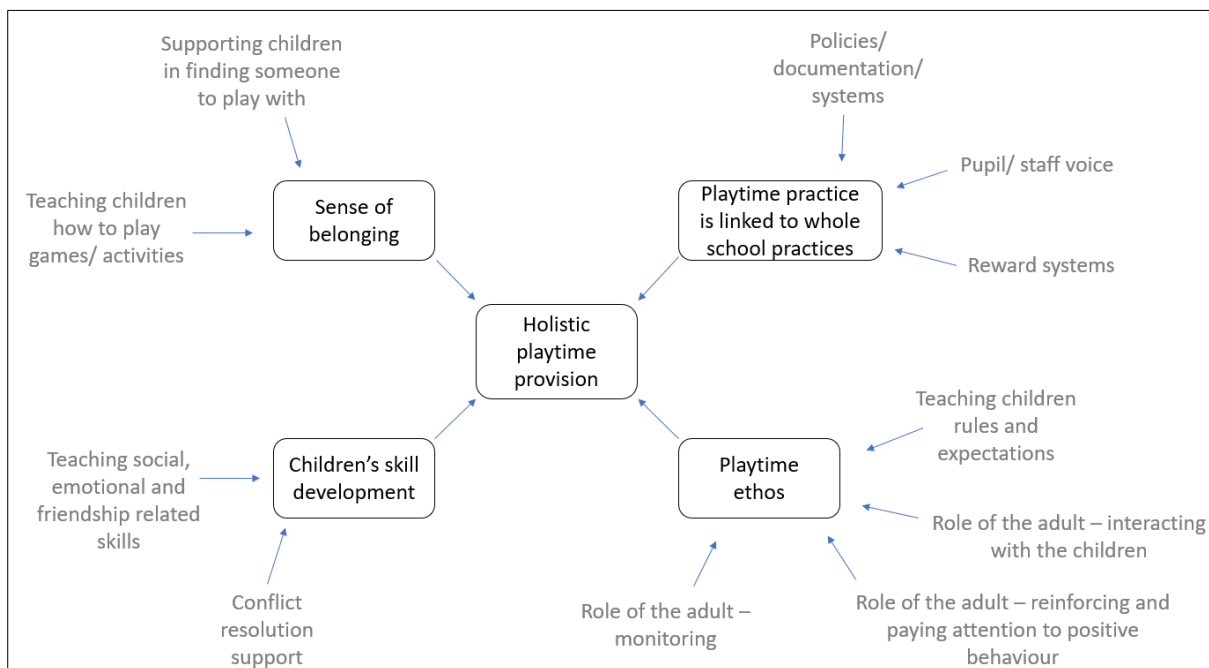


Figure 2: A thematic map illustrating themes and sub-themes

### ***Children's skill development***

Four studies used the *teaching of social and emotional skills* as a whole or part intervention. Interventions focused upon teaching skills necessary for playtime including those related to assertiveness and friendship, and how to join in games (Frey et al., 2005; Low et al., 2010). Frey et al. (2005) provided parents with activities to use at home to support development of children's social and emotional skills. Three studies involved classroom-based lessons designed to teach these skills (Frey et al., 2005; Lewis et al. 2002; Low et al., 2010).

Three studies involved supporting *conflict resolution* at playtimes. One taught conflict resolution skills (Low et al., 2010), while Frey et al. (2005) offered semi-scripted skill lessons. Anderson-Butcher et al. (2003) trained university volunteers to offer anger management and problem solving skills strategies such as, “‘counting to ten’ or talking to the person or another adult in a calm, responsible manner” (p. 254).

### ***Playtime ethos***

Five studies involved *teaching children rules and expectations* including what the rules were (Leff et al., 2004; Lewis et al., 2000, 2002); how to line up and use equipment (Lewis et al., 2000, 2002); how to ask to join a game or activity (Griffin et al., 2017; Lewis et al., 2002) and expected playtime behaviours, e.g. keep hands and feet to yourself (Lewis et al., 2000; Franzen & Kamps, 2008). Studies provided children with the opportunity to observe modelled behaviours and to practice these with adult support (Franzen & Kamps, 2008; Leff et al., 2004; Lewis et al., 2002). By contrast, Farmer et al. (2017) reduced the number of playtime rules, allowing children to play outside in the rain or allowing rough and tumble play for example, to promote children's free play at playtime. Following the intervention, children reported feeling happier.

Three studies focused upon the *role of the adult at playtimes* in terms of *interacting with the children*. In Lewis et al. (2002) staff gave attention to appropriate behaviour by rewarding children with loop bracelets, while Franzen and Kamps (2008) requested staff try to interact with six students within every five minute period. Lewis et al. (2000) asked staff to greet children, talk about their interests, praise appropriate behaviour and avoid lengthy conversations with other adults.

Further studies looked at the adult role in *monitoring and supervising*, described as adults; moving around, looking around and correcting inappropriate behaviour (Lewis et al., 2002). Low et al. (2010) and Frey et al. (2005) taught staff to recognise and intervene in bullying. Leff et al. (2004) recruited additional parent volunteers to support playtime supervision.

Studies used *reinforcing and paying attention to positive behaviour at playtimes* through staff praising children following the rules (Lewis et al., 2000) and rewarding them for positive behaviour (Franzen & Kamps, 2008; Lewis et al., 2002).

### ***Sense of belonging at playtime***

A number of the studies involved *helping children to find someone to play with* through teaching scripts or providing support structures. Griffin et al. (2017) made use of a buddy bench and simple scripts (e.g. “Can I play?”); and Lewis et al. (2002) taught children how to ask to join a game to help children find someone to play with. Three studies provided organised games, (e.g. parachute games, hot potato, hopscotch, relay races and jump ropes) with children having free choice over participation (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2003; Leff et al., 2004; Lewis et al. 2002). Franzen and Kamps, (2008) highlighted the availability of pre-existing facilities while Farmer et al. (2017) provided children loose parts such as tyres, to promote imaginative play. Anderson-Butcher et al. (2003) chose activities that emphasised

cooperative play and teamwork, whereas Leff et al. (2004) chose games to include children of different ages and genders.

Two studies *involved teaching children how to use the games/ activities* through a variety of means, including interactive assemblies, adult modelling and opportunities to practice (Leff et al., 2004; Lewis et al., 2002).

### ***Whole school practices/understanding***

In terms of *playtime practice linked to whole school systems*, two studies provided staff training and three developed playtime policies. Five studies incorporated *pupil/staff voice*. Examples include Leff et al. (2004) which used a participatory action research model to co-construct a programme to improve children's playtime behaviour; while Edwards (2006) created guidance asking schools to facilitate pupil-centered consultation to assess the playground and create a new design.

## **Discussion**

This research aimed to review the literature in relation to interventions supporting children's SEMH and wellbeing at playtimes and promoting children's right to play. At the outset, it should be acknowledged that a major limitation is that many of the studies are informed by behaviourist principles that focus largely upon social control and in children behaving in the way that adults want them to behave. The authors acknowledge that it is logical to assume that behavioural compliance with adult rules can improve other children's SEMH and wellbeing at playtime, in terms of providing a safe space to play. However, this approach does not recognise a more contemporary understanding of playtime and its benefits for children (UNCRC, 2013). The UNCRC (1989) states that schools must work toward meeting all of children's rights, including their right to play and their right to stay safe

(Article 19). It may well be that approaches that largely focus upon children's right to stay safe may support their wellbeing, but arguably adult social control is the predominant focus in many papers, leaving little room for access to free play. Nevertheless, this paper provides a review of playtime research between 2000 and 2018 and offers a starting point for more contemporary perspectives and ways forward towards supporting children's wellbeing through their right to play. In the next sections, the findings will be discussed in relation to existing research, and their limitations discussed; before implications for contemporary theory and practice are explored.

Studies in this review suggest that supporting children's skills development through the teaching of social, emotional and friendship related skills has been one factor that has been suggested to contribute towards a reduction in bullying, aggression and problematic behaviours (e.g. Frey et al., 2005; Low et al., 2010). However, there is evidence that children learn friendship and social skills through play (Lester & Russell, 2008) and there is an argument that if children's right to play were better recognised, with children having appropriate access to quality play experiences, that they may develop the necessary skills through play itself, with less need for the explicit skills teaching. For example, Farmer et al. (2017) noted that children reported feeling happier at playtimes and were able to solve problems more independently in free play, but adults had greater concerns about playtimes. Maybe the two ideas are not mutually exclusive, and children's free play opportunities can be enhanced by social skills input. Playtimes provide the main opportunity for children to interact with peers and make friends (Baines & Blatchford, 2019), while social and play skills have been found to affect children's wellbeing and development more widely (Weare, 2015). Supporting children's skill development through teaching or modelling conflict resolution skills at playtimes helped contribute towards supporting children in resolving disputes (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2003; Frey et al., 2005; Low et al., 2010). Researchers also suggest

that through play itself children can learn the social and emotional skills need to thrive in social relationships and learn to manage conflict (Lester & Russell, 2008; Mannello et al., 2020). Again, maybe there is scope to explore the merits of both adult and child-led approaches.

Many of the studies taught children to behave in line with the playtime rules. Findings (e.g. Franzen & Kamps, 2008; Leff et al., 2004) suggested that explicit modelling and teaching of playtime rules and expectations could help in reducing aggression and encouraging compliance with playtime rules. Again, this may reflect historical views of behaviour compliance and fail to recognise the potential benefits that play can provide. One study included in this review, noted that through reducing the number of playtime rules children reported feeling happier at playtimes (Farmer et al. 2017).

The results also highlight the importance of the adult's playtime role in interacting with children, paying attention to positive behaviour and actively monitoring and reinforcing behaviours that adults deemed appropriate for playtime. Research suggests that staff-child positive interactions and relationships are important for children's wellbeing at school (Tobia et al., 2019) and recommends that training of playtime supervisors should be reviewed to take children's wellbeing and social development into account (Baines & Blatchford, 2019).

A sense of belonging, in terms of being able to find someone to play with is important to promote cooperative play (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2003; Edwards, 2006; Leff et al., 2004), increase 'children feeling happier' (Edwards, 2006), reduce aggression and reduce 'problem behaviours' (Lewis et al., 2000; 2002). Providing games and activities offered children a means of inclusion at playtime and contributed towards children feeling happier (Edwards, 2006; Farmer et al., 2017); playing with more children (Farmer et al., 2017; Leff et al., 2004); and reducing solitary (Griffin et al., 2017) and problematic behaviours (Leff et al., 2004; Lewis et al., 2000, 2002). Research suggests that having a sense of belonging and



connectedness at school generally and at playtimes is important for children's mental health (McNamara et al., 2015).

The provision of policies, documentation and systems (that simply included playtimes and put playtime rules in line with whole school rules) were suggested to contribute towards reducing bullying/gossip, reducing problematic behaviours and increasing social emotional skills (Edwards, 2006; Leff et al., 2004). Similarly, reward systems linked to whole school systems were found to be useful in improving children's playtime behaviours (Franzen & Kamps, 2008; Lewis et al., 2002). These findings may illustrate the historic/socio-cultural context in the UK, for and the use of EBD and BESD, rather than SEMH terminology; and suggest that current interventions and approaches in this review might focus too heavily on behavioural compliance and give little attention to wellbeing.

### **Limitations**

As mentioned previously a major limitation of this review is that the majority of the papers focus upon social control and getting children to behave as adults would like them to at playtimes. Such approaches fail to acknowledge a more contemporary understanding of the benefits of playtime (UNCRC, 2013) and suggest a dearth of current research. In addition, neither of the papers that arguably hold a more contemporary view of play at playtimes (Farmer et al., 2017; Griffin et al., 2017) were rated 'high'.

Few studies involved both staff and students in their approach. Children and adults often have different perceptions of play (Hobbs et al., 2019) and therefore greater child participation in the development of approaches for playtimes are important (Baines & Blatchford, 2019).

Only universal interventions and not those targeting particular groups were included. Therefore, some well-known playtime interventions (e.g. peer mediation) are not shown in

this review as the more recent research tends to include targeted populations (e.g. children with autism).

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

The dearth of recent research that thoroughly evaluates playtime interventions/approaches towards improving children's SEMH and right to play suggests that the wellbeing benefits of children accessing their right to play at playtime have not been fully recognised. This may be due to a cultural view of playtimes as unimportant and a lack of understanding amongst school-based professionals and policy-makers around the importance of play, particularly in relation to children's wellbeing and social development (Baines & Blatchford, 2019).

Playtimes have been suggested as too often the forgotten and little understood part of the school day (Baines & Blatchford, 2019). Schools need to reconsider and reflect upon the role of playtime staff through the lens of supporting children's SEMH, wellbeing and right to play.

Hobbs et al (2019) stated that EPs have a key role in promoting children's right to play through challenging restrictive practice and supporting whole school practice. This research highlights key areas (e.g. sense of belonging) and key omissions (e.g. practice influenced by contemporary guidance [UNCRC, 2013]) that EPs can consider in supporting children's SEMH and wellbeing at playtime. In addition, EPs are well placed to support schools in implementing social skills and conflict resolution, provide training to staff, guide policy and help to promote children's voice through their right to be heard (Article 12, UNCRC, 1989). Table 2 below provides a model that schools can use to inform their thinking in planning and reflecting on their own playtime provision.

Table 2: A model for playtime provision informed by the findings from paper one

	Key questions to consider
Systemic/ Policy level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are playtimes acknowledged as an important part of the school day?</li> <li>• Is there a playtime policy?</li> <li>• Are playtime behaviour management systems informed by best practice research/ in line with the wider school behaviour management systems?</li> <li>• Do the playtime rules acknowledge and promote children’s right to play alongside promoting children’s right to stay safe?</li> <li>• Are playtime staff provided with training and guidance resources? Does this training include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Training on how to facilitate play</li> <li>▪ Training on how to support and facilitate friendships</li> <li>▪ Conflict resolution training</li> <li>▪ Their role during playtimes (e.g. are they behaviour managers/ play facilitators/ there to interact positively and pay attention to children etc.)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Group/ Playground/ Classroom level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do the children have anything to do at playtimes?</li> <li>• What is the playground ethos? What values are promoted? How are rules shared with the children?</li> <li>• Are children taught social, emotional, friendship and conflict resolution skills?</li> <li>• Are the games that are provided informed by pupil voice?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there a range of games and activities that cater for different interests/ have a cooperative focus?</li> </ul>
Individual level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the child know how to play the games/activities provided?</li> <li>• Does the child understand the playtime rules?</li> <li>• Does the child have the social, emotional and friendship skills they need?</li> <li>• Does the child have anyone to play with?</li> <li>• Does the child feel that they can go to adults for support in conflict resolution?</li> </ul>

### **Implications for Future Research**

This research highlights a dearth of contemporary research evaluating approaches and interventions that focus on children’s SEMH and right to play at playtimes and that existing research focuses largely upon achieving social control. Future research that evaluates playtime approaches promoting children’s SEMH and right to play should investigate and evaluate the impact of holistic playtime provision informed by the sentiments of Article 31 (UNCRC 1989, 2013).

Future research could include more longitudinal research to investigate the impact of children’s playtime experiences on their long-term wellbeing and SEMH at school.

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## **Paper two: Child-led Research Investigating Social, Emotional and Mental Health and Wellbeing Aspects of Playtime**

Prepared for in accordance with author guidelines for submission to the Journal of Educational and Child Psychology (Appendix F)

### **Abstract**

**Aim:** This study aimed to investigate social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing aspects of playtime through child-led participatory action research in one school.

**Method:** A stakeholder group involving the project facilitator (researcher), school staff and four trained child co-researchers (aged 9-10) was established to facilitate the research. The co-researchers were supported to design and facilitate data collection and collaborative thematic data analysis.

**Findings:** Five main themes emerged from analysis: the availability and nature of games, having someone to play with, how people treat each other, the importance of playtimes and views of the playtime rules. This research highlights interactions between the themes as important to children's social and emotional development, and mental health and wellbeing when accessing their right to play during playtime.

**Limitations:** Research was completed on a single site. Repeating the design at another school might yield different results. While steps were taken to minimise power imbalances between the child participants and the project facilitator, it is acknowledged that these are difficult to overcome fully.

**Conclusions:** This study highlights the importance of holistic playtime provision that acknowledges the interactions between themes in supporting children's wellbeing and social and emotional development. It illustrates that with appropriate training and support, children were able to effectively engage in research investigating playtime.

**Key words:** play, recess, playtime, participatory research, pupil voice

## **Introduction**

### **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 31**

It is internationally recognised through Article 31 of the UNCRC (1989) that children have the right to play and to join in a wide range of activities. Recently, children's right to play has received greater recognition through the publication of the Division of Educational and Child Psychology's (DECP) position statement on children's right to play (Hobbs et al., 2019) and the Children's Play Policy Forum's position statement on play (CPPF, 2019). Concern that governments were not acknowledging children's right to engage in spontaneous play due to a range of social, economic and cultural factors led to the publication of General Comment 17 (UNCRC, 2013). Enacting upon Article 31, Welsh and Scottish governments are leading the way through the introduction of policies and legislation focusing upon children's right to play (Scottish Government, 2013; Welsh Government, 2012).

The importance of play to children's emotional, social, physical, health and wellbeing has been extensively researched and documented (Lester & Russell, 2008; 2010), with both immediate and long-term benefits for children (CPPF, 2019; Yogman et al., 2018). Associations have been made between children's experiences at breaktime and their social, emotional and mental health, with impact upon their attention in the classroom, their attitude to school and their achievement (Blatchford & Baines, 2006; Ramstetter, Murray & Garner, 2010). However the potential impact of the playground experience is often overlooked (Mulryan-Kyne, 2014).

Adult perceptions of play, such as considering play as whimsical and pointless (Lewis, 2017) and not worthy of school time (Pellegrini, 2009), have been highlighted as problematic and adult safety fears often result in heavily supervised play at school (Lewis, 2017). Additionally, increases in curricular demand and a focus on a structured curriculum and outcomes have created additional barriers at school in meeting children's right to play

(Blatchford & Baines, 2019), with parents primarily encouraged to focus on and promote their child's academic learning (Belfield & Garcia, 2014).

### **Mental Health and Wellbeing Amongst UK Children**

In the United Kingdom (UK) in recent years, there has been growing attention on the social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) of young people and a focus on what schools can do to support wellbeing (Children's Society, 2015; Weare, 2015). While the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2013) suggested the protection of children's wellbeing is vital, an estimated 12% of young people in the UK has been diagnosed with at least one mental health condition (National Health Service, 2018). There has been a recent UK focus on the role schools have in addressing children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, including a need for whole school wellbeing programmes (Department of Health & Department for Education [DoH & DfE], 2017).

A child's wellbeing has potentially long-term effects into adulthood (Gibbons & Silva, 2011) highlighting the importance of preventative intervention in improving children's long term wellbeing (Reynolds et al., 2007). The school environment impacts upon children's wellbeing and health but is also viewed as important in promoting children's emotional wellbeing (DoH & DfE, 2017). Being connected to people at school can be protective, whilst a poor school environment, bullying and academic failure are considered risk factors (McNamara, Lodewyk, & Franklin, 2018).

### **The UNCRC and Children's Right to be Heard**

Article 12 of the UNCRC (1989, p.6) raised the profile of children's participation, stating: "parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given

due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child". A growing body of literature has investigated the potential impact of participation in research relating to aspects of children's lives, including wellbeing (Atkinson et al., 2019) and children's playground experience (Pearson & Howe, 2017).

There are different degrees of participation, from tokenism to children and adults engaging in shared decision-making (Estyn, 2016) which are often subject to conditions based on children's age or perceived competencies (Christensen & James, 2008). Research has demonstrated that children are able to engage competently with the different stages of research including creating the research questions (Gray & Winter, 2011), designing the research (Kellett, 2011), choosing appropriate methods, collecting and interpreting data (Lundy et al., 2011) and disseminating findings (Kellett et al., 2004). The research recommends that children receive appropriate training and support in engaging meaningfully in research, or as one child stated: 'just teach us the skills please, we'll do the rest' (Kellett et al., 2004, p. 329).

### **Playtime Wellbeing and Children's Right to Play**

The DECP position statement (Hobbs et al., 2019), argued schools and educational psychologists (EPs) have a role in promoting children's right to play at school and promoting play access particularly by not withdrawing playtimes as a punishment and through championing opportunities for child-led play. Playground experiences have been found to be incredibly important to children (Mulryan-Kyne, 2014) with children describing play as a time when they are able to choose activity not supervised or dictated by an adult and this being fun (Blatchford & Baines, 2006). Children often link play with friendship and highlight the importance of having a choice of things to do or play with (Ramstetter, Murray & Garner,

2010). Being disconnected from peers and peer victimisation are documented as the most common causes of loneliness in children and young people (Krause-Parello, 2008).

Concerns continue about children's playtime behaviour, with schools adopting a variety of approaches to promote play access for all children, including: greater levels of supervision by staff, the use of rules and sanctions, specialised provision for specific children, separating the playground into designated spaces and making break times shorter (Mulyran-Kyne, 2014). It has been argued that there is contention between children's right to stay safe, Article 12, and children's right to play, Article 31 (UNCRC, 1989), and that this can present as a dilemma in deciding whether approaches are restricting (often accompanied by safety concerns) or promoting of play (Davey & Lundy, 2011).

The International Play Association (IPA, 2010) argued that for children, play is one of the most important aspects of their lives yet often decisions made about children's playtime fails to encompass their views. In one study, researchers promoted children's right to play and participate through involving children in re-designing their school playground (Pearson & Howe, 2017). In another study, a local authority shared a guidance document focusing upon pupil-centred playgrounds and involved a wide range of stakeholders in the school's playground development (Edwards, 2006). More typically, changes made to the playground are made by adults, whose perceptions of play may differ significantly to that of children (Glenn et al., 2012). In addition, an overemphasis on strategies and interventions to address children's behaviour, aggression and bullying may have consequently led to a lack of understanding and acknowledgement of the potential benefits that the playground can offer (Mulryan-Kyne, 2014).

To date, research papers focusing on playtimes have typically investigated children's physical activity, safety and children's views of playtimes (Pearce & Bailey, 2011), or evaluated interventions within the playground (Farmer et al., 2017). The current research



study aimed to put children's views at the forefront, by promoting their participation in participatory action research and enabling their perceptions to promote playground practice and in doing so answer the following research question: *How can child-led research help elicit children's perspectives on how their playtime experience impacts on their SEMH and wellbeing?*

## **Method**

### **Design**

This research had a youth participatory action research (YPAR) design. YPAR involves the construction of knowledge by children and young people by identifying, researching and addressing problems of importance to them through adult-child partnerships (Shamrova & Cummings, 2017). Participatory action research (PAR) designs have typically focused on increasing participants' power and voice in research, whilst action research has typically focused on instigating social action to solve problems (Anyon et al., 2018).

There is considerable variation in the design of past YPAR projects and in the extent to which they can be considered participatory (Foster-Fishman et al., 2010). Typically, YPAR projects include three core elements:

1. Taking a role in decision making at a leadership level
  2. Receiving training to support them in identifying the concerns in the research setting
  3. Leading and conducting research to understand the nature of the research problem
- (Ozer & Douglas, 2015).

This study used the Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) model to structure the design. Located within an action research framework, RADIO encompasses 'real world research' and aims to develop stakeholder skills through capacity building

(Timmins et al, 2003). Research activities related to the different phases of the RADIO model are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. RADIO phases and related research activities

<b>The RADIO phases</b>	<b>Specific activities and outcomes</b>	<b>YPAR core element</b>
1. Awareness of a need	An EP colleague informed the project facilitator of a school that was interested in supporting children’s wellbeing through improving their playtime provision.	
2. Invitation to act	The project facilitator contacted a senior leader of the school and outlined the suggested YPAR approach. The school then expressed an interest in hosting the research.	
3. Clarifying organisational and cultural issues	Initial meeting between the project facilitator and senior leader to outline the radio model and set a date for the initial stakeholder meeting. It was agreed in collaboration with the school that year 5 children would be the most appropriate to act as co-researchers, as the year 6 children would be focusing on their Standard Assessment Tests (SATs).	
4. Identifying stakeholders in area of need	The senior leader co-ordinated the adults who were interested in joining the stakeholder group (which included the senior leader and two class teachers). The project	1

	<p>facilitator presented the research proposal to the year 5 children and asked for children to indicate anonymously if they were interested in taking the role of co-researcher. The staff selected six children who were interested based upon who they thought would be able to work in a group. Only four of these children returned their parent/carer consent forms and therefore took part as co-researchers.</p>	
<p>5. Agreeing focus of concern (research aims)</p>	<p>The stakeholder group (the four child co-researchers, the first co-researcher, the senior leader and the two class teachers) met and decided upon the main research focus and the aims of the research.</p>	<p>1, 3</p>
<p>6. Negotiating framework for information gathering</p>	<p>The child co-researchers participated in research training and decided on an appropriate methodology, agreed by the other members of the stakeholder group (see Table 4 below for further details). They were also taught and practiced the process of thematically analysing data using an arbitrary topic.</p>	<p>2, 3</p>
<p>7. Gathering information</p>	<p>The child co-researchers gathered information through facilitating four focus groups and observing four playtimes (for approximately ten minutes each time) (appendix I/J/K). Audio data from the focus groups were transcribed. The child co-researchers thematically analysed the findings and chose lines from the transcription to illustrate examples of each of their chosen themes and sub-themes.</p>	<p>2, 3</p>

8. Processing information with research sponsors/stake-holders	The project facilitator and child co-researchers shared research findings with the adults in the stakeholder group (appendix L). The group identified areas for development including; giving children a positive reward system, providing a greater choice of games that is informed by the children themselves and to improve the way in which the children were responding to each other.	2, 3
9. Agreeing areas for future action	A range of actions were agreed including; working with the lunchtime organisers to promote the positive reward system, completing audits with children on the types of games/activities that they would like to be provided, setting up a peer mediation program and providing lunchtime organisers with a restorative framework that they could use with children who have broken the playtime rules.	3
10. Action planning	The stakeholder group planned actions, including who would implement these (appendix M).	3
11. Implementation/ action	The plan was put into action.	
12. Evaluating action	Due to general time/school pressures and a key member of the stakeholder leaving the school the review meeting did not take place. Feedback on the actions were sent to the project facilitator via email correspondence and stated that the actions had worked “well” and that “the activities have	1, 2, 3

	engaged the children and the buddies have taken on a new approach!”	
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Phases 1-8 are the main focus of this research study, with Phases 9- 12 considered briefly.

## **Sample**

### ***School***

This research took place within a school in the North-West of England; the proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium was well above the national average. Sampling was opportunistic, via an EP colleague. The school had attempted previously to improve play access through adult-led initiatives including: staff and students facilitating structured games, training for lunchtime organisers, a staff managed football game, indoor provision and a buddy bench.

### ***Stakeholder group***

Initially, a stakeholder group was established which comprised of a senior leader within the school with responsibility for behaviour, two interested teachers, the child co-researchers and the project facilitators.

### ***Child co-researchers***

Year 5 (Y5) students (aged 9-10) were chosen to act as co-researchers. The project facilitators presented the research pitch to two Y5 classes and asked for volunteers, from which class teachers selected three children from each class who: wanted to take part, were able to work effectively in a group and had informed parental consent (appendices I & J). Initially six Y5 children were chosen to act as co-researchers; however only four children

returned their consent forms in time to participate. The four co-researchers consisted of one white British boy, one white British girl, one British boy with Chinese heritage and one British girl with Pakistani heritage.

***Focus group participants***

A random sampling method was used to recruit children for the focus groups. Specifically, the register for each class was numbered and three children chosen using a random number generator. One boy in Year 3 who had parental consent chose not to take part in the focus group. As only one consent form was received for Year 4 the child agreed to join the Y5 focus group. Children involved in the focus groups are described in Table 4.

Table 4: Participants who took part in the focus groups

	Year (Y) group	Number of children	Age	Sex
Focus group 1	Y1	3	5-6 years	2 boys, 1 girl
Focus group 2	Y2	4	6-7 years	2 boys, 2 girls
Focus group 3	Y3	5	7-8 years	2 boys, 3 girls
Focus group 4	Y4	1	8-9 years	1 boy
	Y5	4	9-10 years	2 boys, 2 girls

***Observation participants***

Observations took place on the playground that was used for Y1 to Y6. Opt out letters were sent home, and 26 received (appendix N). The co-researchers observed for 10 minutes at lunch playtime once a week on a Friday for four weeks.

## Co-researcher Training and Design

Literature advocates for children to be taught the appropriate skills to be able to engage effectively as co-researchers (Kellet et al., 2004) but often lacks recommendations for how to teach these skills in practice. The project facilitator used her prior experience as a mathematics teacher to design and deliver the research methods training to the child co-researchers. A similar approach has been used in other YPAR (Anselma et al., 2019).

The co-researchers took part in four 2-hour sessions that followed the plan outlined in Table 5 below. Further details are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Table 5: Child co-researcher training

Session	Intended outcomes
1. An introduction to the research concept.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The children develop a basic understanding of the research aims;</li><li>- The children develop a basic understanding of data collection.</li></ul>
2. Planning of the research design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The children make an informed choice upon their methods of data collection;</li><li>- They begin to understand how to do their chosen method.</li></ul>
3. Planning of the research design and training around implementing that specific design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The children put their learning into practice, e.g. practice running focus groups with each other;</li><li>- The children practised facilitating the collaborative data thematic analysis process (Braun &amp; Clarke, 2006).</li></ul>

<p>4. Training around implementing that specific design, e.g. holding focus groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The resources are ready to use;</li> <li>- The children feel able and confident to use the resources and put their chosen methods of data collection in place;</li> <li>- The children know what comments they must pass to an adult straight away (e.g. comments around bullying, feeling lonely etc.).</li> </ul>
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### **Child-led Research Methods**

The co-researchers decided that they would use their allocated time to conduct one focus group per year group, apart from the Reception class who had a separate playground and Year 6, who would leave at the end of the academic year. The co-researchers created the focus group questions through the process outlined below (see Figure 3) created by the researchers as a logical approach, in the absence of any research located which outlined how to support child co-researchers to generate focus group questions (appendix I).

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussed and thought-showered their answers to two questions: What can affect your well-being/make you feel good or bad at playtime? What do you want to find out about other children’s well-being at playtime?</li> <li>• Wrote down questions to ask about social, emotional and well-being factors at playtimes.</li> <li>• Grouped similar questions together and created a heading question, using the others as sub questions</li> <li>• With the project facilitator’s help, considered the wording of each question, to avoid problems such as leading questions.</li> </ul> |
|---|

Figure 3: Process for generating focus group questions



The children also created a template for observing playtime, comprising two columns entitled ‘good things for your wellbeing’ and ‘bad things for your wellbeing’. They decided to use sub-headings under each title to help focus their observation. The sub-headings were: friends, games, social and how people communicate with each other. Qualitative data were collected from four focus groups and observation records.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were co-analysed by the child participants and co-researchers using participatory thematic analysis. Jackson (2008) applied a similar adapted version of participatory qualitative thematic analysis with a group. There were two stages to the data analysis:

1. After each focus group the co-researchers facilitated a collaborative data analysis, by asking the participants to write down the main things that had been discussed and then group them together (to provide ‘codes’) (appendix O).
2. The co-researchers then collected the ‘codes’ from each focus group and grouped them into sub-themes and themes using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). They used data from their playground observations to cross reference with the themes. At a later date, the co-researchers then read through the transcripts (that had been transcribed) and selected quotes to reflect the themes and sub-themes. They had previously practised this with an arbitrary topic during the research methods training.

This approach to data analysis was chosen as part of the YPAR methodology and is fairly novel in education research. It has been much less common for YPAR research to involve children in all stages of the research and particularly in the data analysis stage. This approach was based on previous research that used very similar participatory group approaches to analyse and theme qualitative data (Foster-Fishman et al., 2010).

## **Ethical Considerations**

The research project was approved by the university ethics committee, after rigorous review (appendices E/F/G). Co-researchers received training on safeguarding procedures and were reminded of these prior to each research activity (appendix J). Concerns were documented and passed to relevant staff after a disclosure of bullying.

For reasons which were unclear, a high number of opt out letters were received for playground observations. Precautions were taken to ensure that children were not observed where parental consent was withdrawn.

A common criticism of YPAR research is that due to power imbalances, the adults involved have a responsibility to act on the research findings and not to treat it as a ‘novelty’ simply because it was child generated (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015). The project facilitator explained to the co-researchers that this research would be used to inform a wider theory and practice about children’s views of playtime and that there was potential to make changes to their school, but that this could not be guaranteed.

## **Findings**

The child co-researchers created four themes during the analysis; *having someone to play with, games, things about playtime* and *how people treat each other*. Each theme will now be discussed in turn.

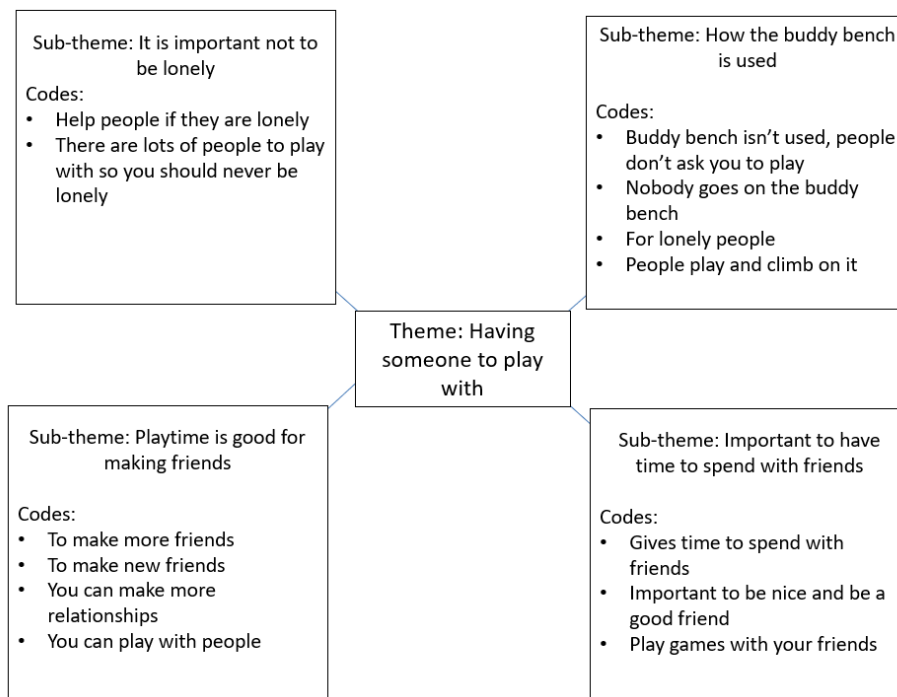


Figure 4: Theme: Having someone to play with

Children within the focus groups described *having someone to play with* at playtimes and having friends as important to their social and emotional wellbeing; one child stated, “I like to spend time with my friends” [Y4/5]. It was recognised that having playtime buddies (children assigned to involve other children in games) meant children did not have to be lonely: “I think it’s a really good idea to have them because if they didn’t have playtime buddies and so, people would be lonely, well...they’d have nobody to play with” [Y3]. Children also recognised opportunities for developing relationships: “I make lots of friends” [Y2]. Some children were unaware that there was a ‘buddy bench’ on the playground, with others commenting that it was not used appropriately, for example: “but people [are] playing on it and so no lonely people can get to it” [Y3], or “no-one uses it” [Y4/5].

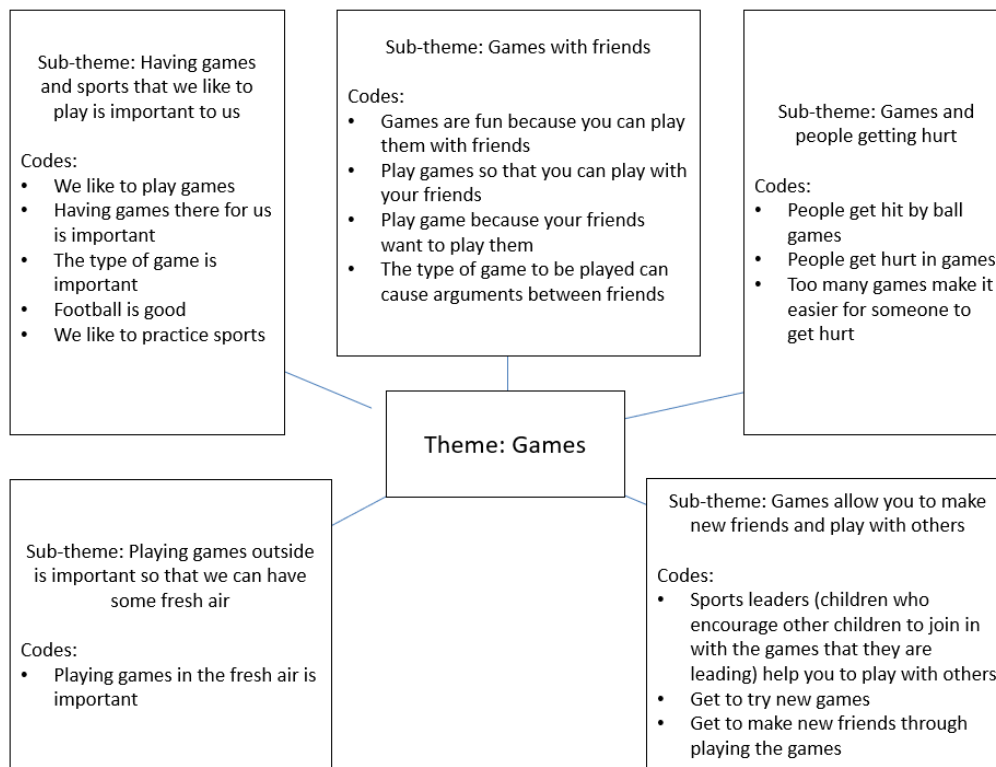


Figure 5: Theme: Games

The children spoke at length about the number and types of games available, their favourite games and that they enjoyed football and sports at playtime. Others offered suggestions for improvements to playtime games. Some children suggested that there were not enough games and others linked the number of games to perceptions of safety: “lots of people are getting hurt with all of the games that are on the playground at the moment” [Y3].

One Y3 child thought there should be a greater degree of personal choice over the types of games available: “we should be allowed to bring in... like a box or colouring if we don’t want to do anything that is on the playground”. Games were also given as a frequent reason to why the children “fell out” with their friends: “like if one person wants someone to join in, the other person don’t, you just all separate from each other and you all just don’t become friends” [Y4/5].

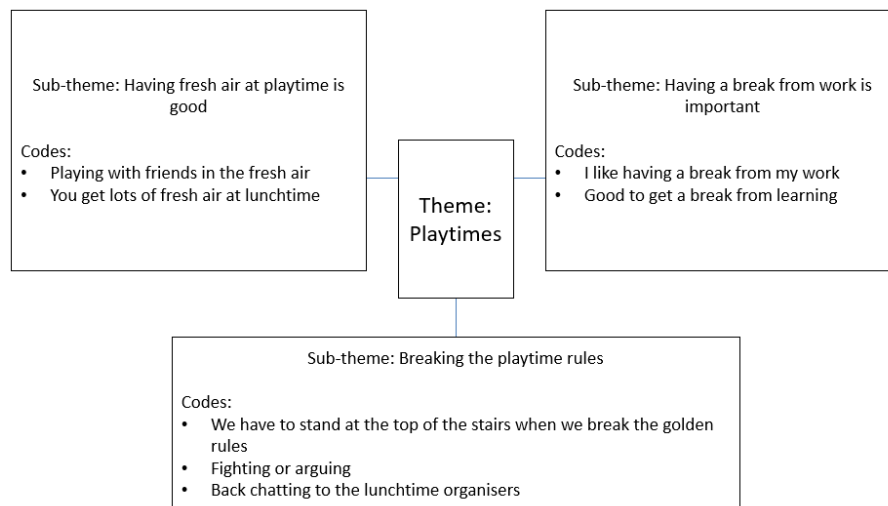


Figure 6: Theme: Playtimes

Children recognised that playtimes offered fresh air, a break from work and free choice, “you feel like you’re just a turtle in your shell [when in the classroom] but when you’re outside you feel like you’re out of your shell” [Y4/5]. Throughout the focus groups children suggested that their break time was too short: “Oh... I wish we had longer” [Y4/5].

The children explained that the consequences for breaking the rules were responded to with specific consequences that were different to the typical classroom consequences; “punching and kicking, that’s when you get sent at the top of the stairs” [Y2]. The children suggested that consequences often involved being reprimanded by an adult with little opportunity for discussion or joint problem-solving, “I don’t like lunchtime because...so... when... when I hurt someone by accident, they just tell me off” [Y2].

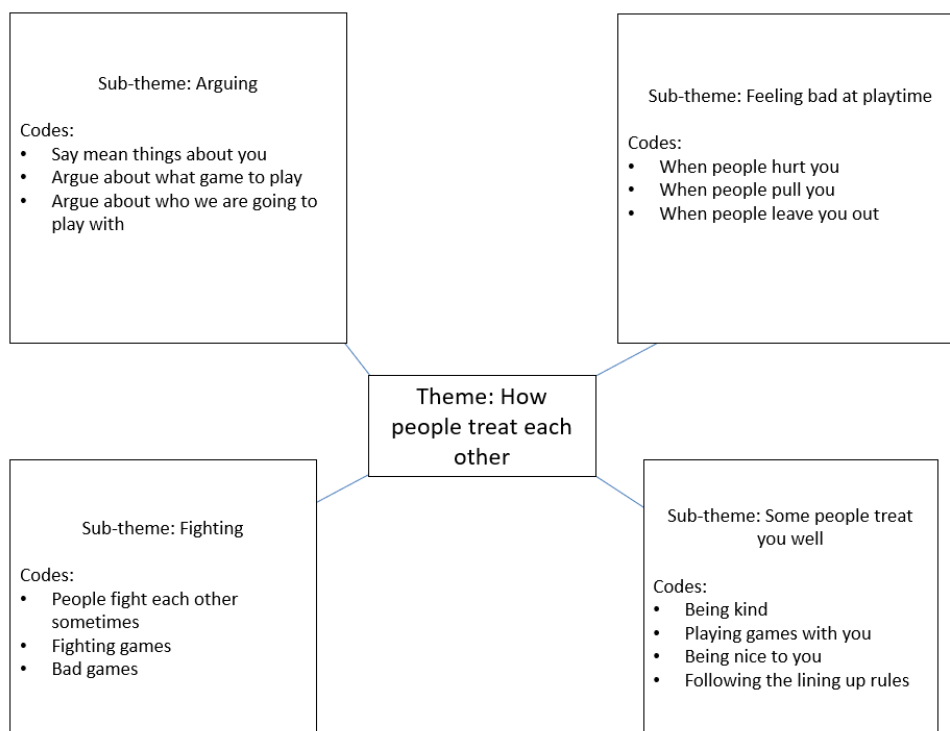


Figure 7: Theme: How people treat each other

The younger children spoke more positively about how people treat each other at playtime, with Year 1 children referring to playtime as “good” and “happy”. Throughout all of the other focus groups (with the exception of the Y1 focus group) children reported feeling they were treated badly by other children at playtime, for example: “people, like just being mean to me and it’s, they’re treating me like dirt” [Y2] and “break can be a little bit like vicious because some people like have fights and stuff” [Y4/5]. There was only one disclosure of being bullied by a particular child, which was reported. All other comments suggested that problems occurred with a range of other children, rather than children being individually targeted: “a lot of people just... giggle or spread rumours about the way you look” [Y4/5].

Being left out was regularly given as a reason for feeling negatively about playtime: “it’s just horrible, not letting people be friends with you” [Y4/5]. Aggressive fighting and arguing between friends and others were mentioned throughout all focus groups as common at

playtime, one Year 2 noted, “my friends start to fight with me.” When the child co-researchers enquired what the children fought about, frequently given reasons included choosing which game to play, “one wants to play one game and then the other person wants to play the other game” [Y4/5]; and trying to resolve disputes, “it just starts two people arguing and then more people that weren’t there in the first place just get involved” [Y4/5].

The child participants and the co-researchers made frequent links and highlighted the interactions between the themes and sub-themes, as illustrated in Figure 8 below.

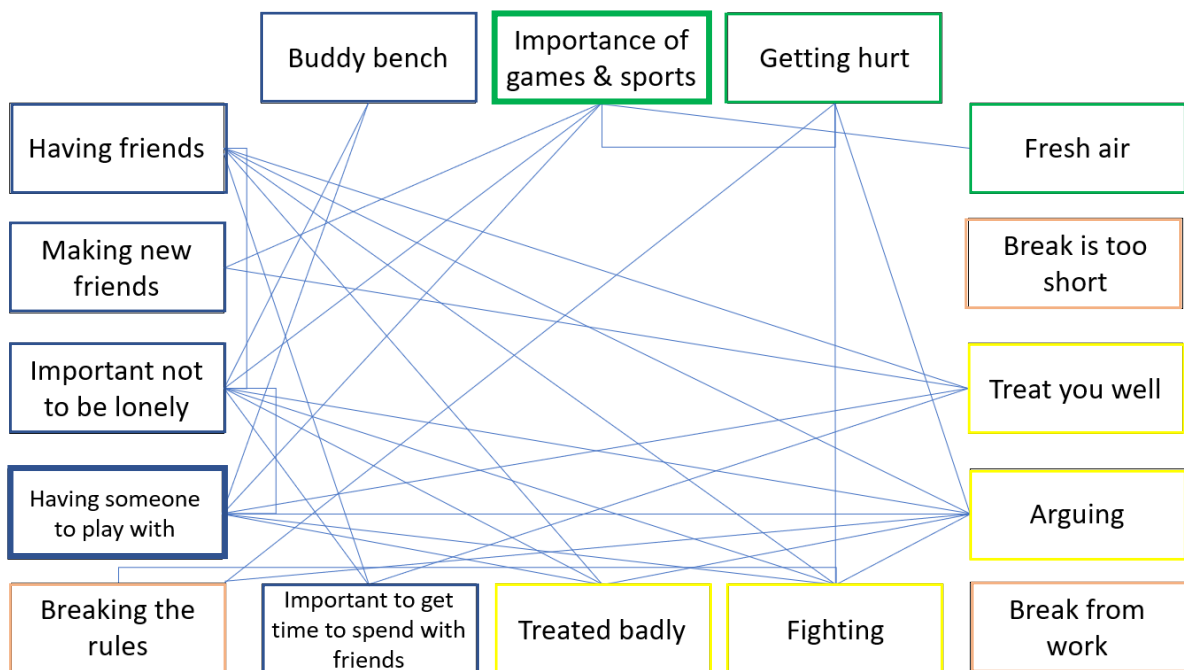


Figure 8: The links and interactions made between the sub-themes<sup>1</sup>

There was a significant overlap in the sub-themes and codes as presented by the co-researchers. One could suggest that the co-researchers did not understand the process of thematic analysis; however, the co-researchers were able to provide a logical rationale to the project facilitator for why they had grouped the codes and sub-themes together. This occurred

<sup>1</sup> The colours in this figure represent the different themes identified through this research. Theme headings are shown through thicker coloured lines, sub-themes are shown through the thin coloured lines.

across focus groups and within the thematic analysis discussions with the co-researchers. The children gave reasons for grouping themes together (e.g. *people hurting each other* and *games*) noting that the interactions between these items were key. The children emphasised that they wanted to the interaction between themes to be shared. For example, if a friend did not want to play the game that a child wanted to play then this was suggested to be a barrier to wellbeing. One child identified the interaction between *friends* and *games* as being important to her: “I don’t have a favourite game because I like to play with [friend] a lot and she’s always making up new games...” [Y5]. This surmounted to a key finding from this research; that children do not consider elements of their playtime as discrete entities. Rather the elements present as an interwoven experience in which can influence their SEMH and wellbeing.

### **Feedback to the Stakeholder Group and Action Planning**

Although there is not scope within this paper to fully explore the RADIO phases following data gathering (9-12), it is important from both an ethical and practitioner perspective to highlight how the research informed practice. The children and facilitator fed back to the stakeholder group, strengths and areas for improvement were identified and an action plan was created. The action plan was then implemented and reviewed via email correspondence.

Key actions were:

- To improve the ethos at playtime through implementation of a positive reward system and staff interacting positively with children
- To increase the availability of things for children to do at playtimes informed by an audit



- To support conflict management through providing playtime staff with a restorative justice framework to follow and peer mediation training for children to act as ‘buddies’ and peer mediate at playtimes

## **Discussion**

This research aimed to explore children’s views of playtime in a single setting through child led YPAR methods. Findings will be discussed and explored in relation to the research question: *How can child-led research help elicit children’s perspectives on how their playtime experience impacts on their SEMH and wellbeing?* before considering the study’s limitations and its implications for EP practice.

### **Children’s Perceptions of Playtime**

A key finding from this research was the emphasis that the children made on the interactions between the sub-themes, for example *games* and *friend*. This finding contrasts with previous predominantly adult-led research that has highlighted discrete elements (e.g. friends) but not necessarily the interactions between them (Baines & Blatchford, 2019). Children highlighted the importance of having someone (ideally friends) to play with at playtime as otherwise they would be lonely. Previous research has noted being lonely or having no-one to play with has resulted in a negative impact on the child’s health and wellbeing (Krause-Parello, 2008). Conversely, feeling positively connected to other children at school was associated with greater resilience and better wellbeing (Aldridge et al., 2016).

The children highlighted ‘how people treat each other’ at playtimes as important, and that being treated badly by others often affected them negatively at playtime. This is in line with previous research highlighting the detrimental impact of negative relational playtime experiences on children’s short and long term wellbeing (Haltigan & Vaillancourt, 2014; Wolke & Lereya, 2015) . This appeared to occur particularly from year two onwards (aged 6-

7 onwards) and was suggested to occur with their friends and peers, as opposed to being targeted or bullied by one particular child. Peer relationships are very important for the development of social and emotional skills, such as emotional regulation, which support future physical and mental health (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011; Eisenberger & Cole, 2012). Children who do not have supportive peer relationships are more likely to experience social, emotional and behaviour difficulties that can cumulatively affect both their feelings towards school and mental health (Ladd et al., 2017).

Trying to resolve disputes, choosing which game to play and being left out were all given as examples of children being treated negatively by others. Research suggests that being left out at school is associated with a range of negative outcomes including mental health difficulties and poor emotional self-regulation (Elenbas & Killen, 2016). In line with previous research (McNamara et al., 2015), the children suggested that arguments, fighting and disagreements were some of the most negative experiences at playtime.

The availability and type of games were reported to be important to children in terms of enjoyment and participation, although some children raised concerns about personal and others' safety. Notably, previous research has documented how adult safety concerns restrict free-play opportunities and their developmental benefits, through the creation of rules (Lester & Russell, 2010; McNamara et al., 2015) and it seems possible that in this school that children may have been influenced by adult safety messages.

Children felt that playtimes were an opportunity to have a break from work, supporting findings by Blatchford & Baines (2019), but that playtimes were too short. Notably, playtimes have been made shorter over the past decade due to increased curriculum pressures and concerns around behaviour (Lewis, 2017), leading Hobbs et al. (2019, p.4), to state: "We are concerned by the diminishing opportunities for play within the lives of children."

‘Fresh air’ related to enjoyment, outdoor games and being able to play with friends, although it is unclear whether this was a euphemism for being outside. While the notion of fresh air being important to wellbeing is logical, it is not well documented in the research. Research documents that high levels of classroom humidity and temperature can impact negatively on children’s learning, attention and engagement (De Dear et al., 2015). By contrast, being outside and connecting to nature has been positively linked to wellbeing and mental health, as well as creative play (Maller & Townsend, 2006; Tremblay et al., 2015; White et al., 2019).

The children emphasised in the focus group collaborative data analysis, and when the co-researchers completed the final thematic analysis, the importance of the interactions between the themes. The children felt strongly that they wanted this information to be shared as it reflected their perspective of what was important to their SEMH and wellbeing at playtimes.

### **Involvement of Children in the Research**

This research suggests that the children involved were well placed to understand and explain the playtime context. All the children involved, both co-researchers and child participants, seemed to take the process very seriously and were able to share their views. There appeared to be a high level of respect between the co-researchers and focus groups participants and the children spoke about playtimes with great importance. Overall the process enabling this research to be child led appeared successful and produced a rich and unique dataset.

### **Limitations and Areas of Future Research**

This research was completed in a single setting and outcomes may have been determined by the school context and ethos, and the communities in which the children live. Future

research could follow a similar process to investigate children's views of the impact of playtime on SEMH and wellbeing across different contexts to help establish wider views.

Another limitation and a common barrier to YPAR is the potential for power imbalances, particularly in a school context. While steps were taken to minimise these, it is acknowledged they are difficult to overcome fully. Atkinson et al. (2019) suggested that to move beyond tokenism in child-led participatory research, that a change in school culture is needed so that children are not only involved in research but that their views on issues important to them are both heard and acted upon; thereby contributing to their human rights.

A limitation of this research is that the children in the research were not the commissioners of it and did not decide to focus on playtimes; this reflects a limit to the children's participation that was difficult for the researcher to overcome. Although not commissioned by the children in this research study, the literature does suggest that play and playtimes are often highlighted as being of great importance to children (IPA, 2010; Mulryan-Kyne, 2014).

Due to the degree of overlap between themes and sub-themes and the multi-directional interactions that were highlighted by the children, it could be suggested that the adult-imposed model of thematic analysis (although enacted by the co-researchers themselves) was not in line with the child-led ethos of this research and therefore the data analysis did not conform to the expected presentation of thematic analysis (as the themes overlap). Future research could replicate the study process but ask the children to create their own method of analysis and format for presenting their findings.

Another potential limitation is that children with sub-optimal playtime experiences might have been less likely to come forward, either by not volunteering to be a co-researcher or by not consenting to participate in focus groups or observations. Reasons for the high opt-out observation rates were unclear but could include, documentation about the research being off-

putting or inaccessible; or parents' concerns that children might have been singled out or labelled.

Due to the exploratory nature of this research and additional time constraints, a limitation of this research is that due to school circumstances beyond the project facilitators' control (e.g. a key member of staff leaving the school), it was not possible to conduct a follow-up to look at outcomes arising as a result of the feedback; or a second action research cycle. It therefore seems plausible that the anticipated and desired level of monitoring and adjusting has not happened. Future research could replicate the process whilst taking baseline measures and more thoroughly evaluating the impact of longitudinal changes.

### **Implications of the Research Findings**

One important implication of this research schools is recognising how playtimes contribute towards children's SEMH and wellbeing. General comment 17, suggests that schools have a major role in enabling Article 31 rights and that this is particularly important for children whose right to play is marginalised (UNCRC, 2013). This research highlights potential strategies that schools could implement to address common difficulties at playtimes, such as the provision of games, teaching children a prosocial way of agreeing on which game to play, teaching friendships and conflict resolution skills, and providing a means of finding someone to play with. Another implication is that the children suggested that both the provision of games at playtime but also adults consulting them in providing accessible and inclusive games that minimise conflict was important to them.

EPs can potentially support schools in using child-led action research to investigate their playground context and highlight areas for improvement. Additionally, understanding the interactions between the identified themes and subthemes in this research may have implications for EPs supporting children experiencing difficulties at playtime. The research

highlights that a range of factors and the relationship between them needs to be considered.

Table 6 provides a model informed by the findings of this paper.

Table 6: A model of playtime provision informed by the findings from paper two

	Key questions to consider
Systemic/ Policy level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are playtimes acknowledged as being important for children’s social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing?</li> <li>• Are children given the time and space (with ‘fresh air’) that they need at playtimes to promote their SEMH and wellbeing?</li> <li>• Are children positively reinforced for pro-social behaviour?</li> <li>• Are children able to engage in free play behaviours?</li> <li>• Is there a balance between promoting children’s right to play and in keeping children safe?</li> </ul>
Group/ Playground level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the playtime ethos? Do children treat each other well? Do they go to adults for support, to engage with them positively or to play?</li> <li>• Are any games/activities provided for children? Are they informed by pupil voice?</li> <li>• Are children taught a pro-social way of agreeing which game to play?</li> <li>• Can children seek support to resolve conflict? Are these opportunities used as a means of teaching skills rather than punishment?</li> </ul>
Individual level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do children have someone to play with?</li> <li>• Do they know how to find someone to play with?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do they have any support in finding someone to play with or in making friends?</li> <li>• What are their views about playtimes?</li> <li>• If the child is experiencing difficulty at playtime and support is provided, consider whether the support is holistic.</li> <li>• How are the interactions between the elements of support provided affecting the child (e.g. if football is provided but this child does not like football and his/her peers do this may affect his/her SEMH)?</li> <li>• Do they have any conflict resolution skills?</li> </ul>
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The co-researchers became more competent in facilitating the research over time. This finding has important implications for future child-led research, suggesting that children may benefit from observing others conducting research or having the opportunity to practise their skills prior to beginning the research. Finally, the project facilitator found that the co-researchers needed some guidance in communicating effectively with their peers. Therefore, the explicit teaching of ‘soft skills’ such as speaking audibly, gaining the attention of the group, and demonstrating confidence may be beneficial in future child-led research ‘training sessions’.

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## **Paper 3: The Dissemination of Evidence to Professional Practice**

### **Introduction**

This paper intends to discuss the dissemination of findings from paper one ('Supporting children's playtime wellbeing and right to play: a literature review') and paper two ('Child-led research investigating social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing aspects of playtime') to professional practice. The concepts of practice-based evidence and evidence based practice (EBP) shall be discussed and related to the literature outlining effective dissemination of research. The implications of the research findings of paper one and paper two at the research site, organisation level, and professional level are then discussed, and then the proposed and already enacted strategy for the dissemination of the research will be outlined.

### **Section A: Evidence Based Practice and Practice-Based Evidence**

#### **Evidence Based Practice**

A standard outlined in the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) proficiencies for educational psychologists (EPs) in the United Kingdom (UK) states that EPs should be "able to engage in evidence based and evidence-informed practice" (HCPC, 2016, p. 12). There is debate within the profession on the relevance and utility of EBP to the real-world, particularly in the quickly developing and varied contexts in which EPs practice.

The concept of EBP was first used in the field of medicine to make a stronger connection between research and practice with the aim of enhancing the quality of practice by making use of the best available evidence, as opposed to professional opinion (Sur & Dahm, 2011). Arguably, both in the fields of medicine and in psychology, EBP may be over simplistic and may illustrate "eliminating potential confounding variables and involve homogeneous, highly

motivated individuals” (Glasgow, Vogt, & Boles, 1999, p.1322). However, the promotion of EBP within educational psychology and education has gained momentum and is based on the notion of what is proven to work (Fox, 2011). Researchers argue that this is because through making use of the best available evidence practitioners can select educational interventions based on the evidence of their effectiveness, as demonstrated in research (Dunsmuir et al., 2009). The rationale for using EBP is to enhance practice that is supported by empirical studies (American Psychological Association [APA] Task Force on Evidence Based Practice with Children and Adolescents, 2006, p.5) and “it’s about making a conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of the best available evidence” (Briner, 2019). However, the APA Presidential Task Force on Evidence Based Practice (2006) acknowledged that evidence available in research may not always suit all contexts or needs in practice and that attention to the methods and conclusions of empirical studies is very important in weighing up its relevance to practice.

The Department for Children Schools and Families (2008) Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS) guidance highlights a number of aspects that limit the implementation of EBP including: that there may be gaps in the evidence base, that the research (particularly from a clinical setting) may not be appropriate or transferrable to other contexts and that real life difficulties often need more than one approach or intervention.

The APA (2006, p.273) defined evidence based practice in psychology (EBPP) as “the integration of the best available research with clinical expertise in the context of patient characteristics, culture and preferences”. Woods, McArdle and Tabassum (2014) stated that “this position is congruent with proponents of ‘practice-based evidence’ who support the safe trialling of innovative techniques by practitioners, with the aim of building and inclusive, practitioner-led evidence based” (p. 34). Woods et al. (2014) suggested that the APA definition may be wide in its nature to address some of the criticisms of EBPP.



## **Practice Based Evidence**

Barkham, Hardy and Mellor-Clark (2010) suggested that practice based evidence allows interventions that do not have a pre-existing evidence base to be trialled and through this it is possible for an inclusive evidence base to emerge. Fox (2011) proposed that evidence based practice is based on the principle that the intervention that has been tested would be effective for all and therefore randomised controlled trials should not be the basis for deciding on an intervention for an individual. Previously, Fox (2003) advocated that EPs have an important role in relation to strengthening the evidence base through empirical research, turning their own practice into evidence.

This supports arguments that EPs are scientist practitioners. Fallon, Woods and Rooney (2010) stated that:

EPs are fundamentally scientist-practitioners who utilise, for the benefit of children and young people (CYP), psychological skills, knowledge and understanding through the functions of consultation, assessment, intervention, research and training, at organisational, group or individual level across educational, community and care settings, with a variety of role partners (p. 4).

The British Psychological Society (2005) suggested that the scientist-practitioner uses their psychological knowledge, skills and theory to inform their thinking. Paper one illustrated that there is a dearth of research investigating the SEMH aspects of playtimes. Therefore, a scientist practitioner approach to investigating play could use the plan, assess, do, review process to gather data, notice and adjust, formulate, and hypothesis test alongside using a practice/research protocol/frameworks, specifically the Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) model (Timmins et al., 2003).

## **Evidence Based Practice and this Research**

There are several criticisms of the research reviewed in paper one, outlining playtime approaches/ interventions to address children's social, emotional and mental health (SEMH)/wellbeing. The first is that many of the interventions and approaches focused upon reducing behaviour incidents/bullying without considering more contemporary views of play. Secondly, many researchers argue that children's and adults' perceptions of play can vary greatly (Glenn et al., 2012); paper one found that there was a lack of pupil voice or participation in the majority of the research papers investigating playtimes. Therefore, the current evidence base could be argued to illustrate a largely adult perspective of playtime provision. Paper two aimed to address this gap by considering the views of children in promoting SEMH at playtime by involving them as co-researchers in creating and implementing the research design and being involved in the data analysis.

## **Section B: Dissemination of Research**

Wilson, Peticrew, Calnan and Nazareth (2010) stated that dissemination is a "planned process that involves consideration of target audiences and the settings in which research findings are to be received" (p. 2). There has been longstanding concern that there is a gap between the dissemination of findings from research and their impact upon practice (Morrissey et al., 1997). Dissemination of research is often considered to be an afterthought for many researchers (Keen & Todres, 2007). This could lead to questions about the purpose of research is if it does not lead to developments in practice. Another criticism of the dissemination of research is that it is often through journal articles and conferences in which the audience is more likely to be that of academics rather than practitioners (Keen & Todres, 2007).

Harmsworth, Turpin, Rees and Pell (2001) contend that there should be a planned strategy of dissemination prior to conducting the research. This may be more challenging when research follows a youth participatory action research (YPAR) methodology that aims for stakeholders to collaboratively plan and (in parts) deliver some of the dissemination of the findings. Therefore, for paper two a loose strategy was created that included elements thought logical (e.g. the researcher and child co-researchers feeding back the findings of the research to the stakeholder group as part of the RADIO model (Timmins et al., 2003)/ the researcher's intention to publish the findings). However, the researcher's approach to this strategy was to allow it to be flexible and shaped by the process and stakeholders of the research.

Harmsworth and Turpin (2001) suggested that researchers consider the dissemination of their research at three levels. 'Dissemination for awareness' is the first level that Harmsworth and Turpin (2001) proposed that researchers should consider. This involves reaching a wider audience and allowing people to become aware of the research at a basic level. At this level people may pass on information about the research by word of mouth. Here paper one and paper two might support EPs and school staff to become more aware of school's playtime provision and/or children's right to play.

The second level, 'dissemination for understanding' is the level at which researchers are suggested to directly target specific audiences for dissemination of their research. The audiences should be chosen and considered based upon the researcher's perceived benefits of the dissemination of their research to them. The strategy at this level should aim to disseminate the research in a way that enables the chosen groups to understand the research in detail and at a deeper level.

At the third level, requiring completion of the other levels, 'dissemination for action' aims to change and develop the practice of the targeted audiences. Harmsworth and Turpin (2001) suggested that the target audience needs to be those who have agency and can

influence organisational change. Through dissemination at this level the target audience can have proficient understanding and knowledge of the research that enables them to instigate real change. The researcher aimed to address this level through the dissemination of the findings of paper two (by the researcher and the child co-researchers) to the stakeholder group enabling the creation of an action plan specific to the research school's context.

Curry (2012) proposed that there has been a drive in the UK towards open access research publications, while Fox (2003) suggested that some EPs do not feel confident in accessing research despite having received training. This may have changed in recent years with the recent requirement for new EPs to train to doctoral level. In the school context, Slavin (2013) stated that the lack of evidence based interventions in schools may be due to there not being many studies that have evaluated that intervention, current research not being disseminated effectively, little incentive for schools to change their interventions and implement new approaches, and a lack of knowledge or support to implement them effectively. Teachers may arguably have little time for, and potential access to research databases.

The findings of paper one indicates that there is a dearth of research evaluating more contemporary approaches or interventions for playtimes. This could be argued to be in line with previous research that describes playtime as “the forgotten part of the school day” (Blatchford, 1989, p. 4; Baines & Blatchford, 2019). Therefore, dissemination of this research at all the three levels of Harmsworth and Turpin's (2000) model could be beneficial in both targeting many of the commonly experienced difficulties at playtimes (e.g. bullying etc.) and in promoting children's right to play.

## **Section C: Research Implications of Papers One and Two**

The effective dissemination of the research findings to a range of relevant professionals can promote the use of EBP. Prior to outlining the dissemination strategy, the implications of the research findings for practice at the research site level, the organisational level and the professional level are discussed.

### **Implications for the Research Site**

The implications of the findings from paper two for the research site highlight the factors that can contribute towards children's SEMH and wellbeing; in terms of helping staff to support children to access their right to play. Another implication from paper two is that the children highlighted the interactions between key factors as important which could suggest that the school need to focus on providing a holistic playtime provision to support children's right to play.

### **Implications at the Organisational Level**

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that children should have a right to be heard in matters relating to them. Recently, there has been greater emphasis on schools listening and responding to children's views on matters of importance to them. Paper two provides schools with an example of how they can promote children's voices and their participation towards improving their playtime provision. This approach could also be used to investigate children's views and participation for other areas of school life.

Paper one highlighted the importance of the adult's role at playtimes in interacting with children, reinforcing and paying attention to positive behaviour and in actively monitoring children. Similarly, the results suggest that having a sense of belonging in terms of being able

to find someone to play with at playtimes was important in supporting children's SEMH/wellbeing. These findings have implications at an organisational level for schools in terms of ensuring that playtime staff have the appropriate skills and training, and that approaches are considered and put in place.

Paper one and paper two provide schools with strategies/approaches and key areas to consider in improving their playtime provision. The children in paper two highlighted the interactions between factors as being important. One implication of this finding is that any intervention or approach should be considered holistically rather than only targeting one aspect (e.g. friendships) considered important to children's SEMH at playtimes.

### **Implications of the Research at a Professional Level**

The findings from paper one and paper two have direct implications for EPs and school staff at the individual child and systemic level. The implications of the findings from paper one for the research site suggest that a holistic playtime provision that encompasses preventative strategies and planned reactive responses are important for children's SEMH and well-being on the playground. In the researcher's experience, difficulties at playtimes often arise as an area of focus in individual consultations for children at both the individual and group levels. Arguably EPs are well placed to provide support to schools in addressing difficulties at playtimes at an individual group or systemic level. Another implication of the findings from paper one is that the implementation of playtime approaches and interventions to address children's SEMH and wellbeing and their right to play at school has not been fully considered. In addition, many of the studies were informed by a behaviourist perspective where interventions largely focused upon instilling social control. An implication of this finding is that schools could consider alternate theoretical approaches to child development (e.g. attachment theory) and more contemporary research outlining how to promote

children's play. Potentially EPs are well placed to support schools in the practical implementation of strategies from alternative theories.

Pupil voice and participation in matters of importance to children and young people has been highlighted as an area that schools and governments should focus upon through Article 12 (UNCRC, 1989) and EPs have a role to play in facilitating this. Paper two outlines a process of involving children as co-researchers that could be used for other areas of focus for school development/research. Paper one suggests that there is a dearth of more contemporary evidence based approaches to supporting playtimes. It could be argued that EPs have a role in facilitating further research around playtimes and in promoting children's right to play at school. A play position paper from the Division of Education and Child Psychology (DECP) states that:

Educational psychologists have a key role in championing opportunities for child-led play for all children both in and outside school, for example through: challenging practice that restricts or reduces access to play; advocating for access to play within casework and supporting whole-school initiatives to promote play (Hobbs et al., 2019, p. 4).

## **Section D: Strategy for Dissemination and Measuring Impact**

Harmsworth and Turpin's (2001) model was used to plan the dissemination of the research detailed in papers one and two. This dissemination has been conducted in a variety of means.

- Paper one has been submitted for publication for a special edition of Educational and Child Psychology focusing upon play called 'Children's right to play: challenges and opportunities' which is due to be published in September 2020 (appendix P). Paper two has also been submitted for publication for the same special edition of the Educational and Child Psychology. The call for papers specified that "the editors are

looking for contributors from those who can add to the understanding of play within the lives of children and young people including the contribution that applied psychologists, particularly educational psychologists can make”. The content of the call for papers and the opportunity to promote children’s right to play amongst the EP community was the rationale for submitting both papers to this journal.

- The researcher and the child co-researcher disseminated the findings of paper two to the stakeholder research team in the research site (appendix L).
- The researcher co-authored the DECP position statement on children’s right to play (Hobbs et al., 2019) (Appendix Q). The researcher also disseminated the findings from paper two in an article in the Play for Wales magazine to reach a wider audience (Appendix R).
- The researcher delivered a workshop outlining paper two at the DECP conference in January 2020 (Appendix S).
- The researcher has disseminated the findings from both papers in her own practice and through discussions with educational psychology colleagues and school staff.
- The researcher has submitted an abstract for the upcoming International School Psychology Association (ISPA) conference.
- The researcher aspires to be involved in supporting three new right to play commissions for trainee educational psychologists (TEPs) at the University of Manchester, commencing in September 2020.

### **Dissemination for Awareness, Understanding and Action**

The next section will consider each item of dissemination at the three levels, dissemination for awareness, understanding and action, as suggested by Harmsworth and Turpin’s (2001) model.



### ***Co-authoring the DECP position statement***

The DECP publishes position statements to raise the profile and provide guidance on topics felt to be of importance. The position paper on ‘Children’s right to play’ was published in 2019 (Hobbs et al., 2019). The publication can be freely accessed online and has been shared via various social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter etc.) and through the British Psychological Society’s website to enhance awareness of children’s right to play. The position statement aimed to develop the readers understanding of children’s right to play through highlighting Article 31 of the UNCRC (1989), outlining the literature on the importance of play for children and explaining the barriers to play documented in research.

The position paper explicitly states the DECP’s stance on children’s right to play and includes a position relevant to EPs, local authorities and education settings, e.g. “Withdrawing break time opportunities for play in school should never be used as a punishment (e.g. for misbehaviour or completing unfinished work), nor the threat of withdrawal be used to control children’s behaviour” (Hobbs et al., 2019, page 4). The ability of EPs and school staff to action such items may be dependent on their expertise in knowing how to implement them, how to create alternative approaches (instead of withdrawing break time) and developing the understanding of stakeholders so that they are on board with such changes. One action that has come as result of the DECP position statement is that three research commissions focusing on this aspect of children’s right to play have been agreed for the 2020-2023 trainee educational psychology cohort at the University of Manchester.

### ***Play for Wales magazine article***

The magazine which the article was published in is called ‘Play for Wales’ and only features articles relating to children’s right to play and guidelines for effective play provision thereby raising awareness of children’s right to play. Therefore, it is likely that anybody who

reads the magazine article detailing paper two is likely to be interested in this general topic area. Readers may not necessarily be able to replicate the process used in paper two in their setting, however they may be able to consider the areas as highlighted within the paper two findings in the context of their setting. The 'Play for Wales' magazine is freely available online and was shared via the website and through social media. The articles for the 'Play for Wales' magazine were written avoiding jargon and aimed to outline the research findings in a way that was accessible to most readers to maximise understanding. Readers may be able to action the research by replicating it in their own setting; this is likely to be dependent on their understanding, skill and agency.

***Workshop outlining paper two delivered at the DECP conference January 2020***

Attendees at the DECP conference were likely to have been predominantly EPs; 16 people attended the workshop. Attendees to the workshop had chosen the session by reading the paper two abstract as advertised in the conference brochure. It is therefore likely that the attendees would have been interested in the topic area; they may already have had some understanding of the area of research or may have been interested as a topic that they had known little about.

The researcher pitched the workshop at a level that was thought to be appropriate for an audience of largely EPs to generate awareness and understanding of the topic detailing literature and psychological frameworks. As most of the attendees to the workshop were likely to have been EPs, hopefully the dissemination for action from this session could be quite far reaching, both in terms of informing EPs' actions for playtime provision for children and through sharing their understanding with colleagues. Face-to-face delivery of the content of paper two enabled attendees to ask questions about the research, this may make attendees

more likely to fall into the category of ‘dissemination for action’ as they had opportunity to explore with the researcher the specific details of the research or how she overcame barriers.

***Paper one and paper two submitted to Educational and Child Psychology journal***

Paper one and paper two have been submitted to the Educational and Child Psychology journal in the hope that they will receive favourable review and be published in November 2020 in a special edition of the journal on ‘Right to play: challenges and opportunities’. Therefore, readers are likely to have either sought this journal to learn more specifically about this topic or may read the articles due to having a subscription and therefore this special edition will aim to promote readers’ awareness and understanding of children’s right to play. Educational and Child Psychology is available to members of the DECP. If the article is published, an author-accepted manuscript will be posted on the supervisor’s university research repository and, following agreement with the DECP, with their ResearchGate account, to allow open access and improve visibility of the papers. Therefore, journal articles may be read by anybody looking to read about the topic.

The journal articles were aimed at readers who are likely to be able to action some of the implications of the research. The submitted papers included detailed session plans for the ‘training sessions’ for the co-researchers in paper two, as available on request, to allow replication of the process. Paper two provides a conceptual model outlining the key factors that children feel are important to their SEMH and well-being at playtimes. Paper one provides a conceptual model that outlines key factors that are thought to be necessary to support effective provision at playtimes. EPs or school staff could apply this understanding to the settings in which they work. Their ability to do so may be reliant on their understanding, their skills, their agency in the setting, time and priorities.

### ***The researcher's own practice***

The researcher can disseminate awareness of children's right to play and playtime provision, supporting children's SEMH and well-being on the playground and involving children in research through professional practice. This may be in the form of raising awareness of children's right to play, right to be heard or the conditions necessary to support children's SEMH and well-being and playtime; and could be through consultations for individual children, systemic work or through informal discussions with colleagues.

Through systemic work relating to either SEMH/ well-being or playtimes, the researcher will be able to share findings of the research to develop the staff's understanding as they are likely to be EPs in which they have been trained to access and understand journal articles. The dissemination for action has altered the researcher's own practice in a number of ways; in knowing the key elements to suggest to schools to include in their playtime provision to support children's SEMH and wellbeing and in considering how to increase participation for children in schools for decisions that affect them both at a caseload and a systemic level.

### ***Feedback to the research site***

The researcher and the child co-researchers fed back the findings of the research to the staff who had been involved with the research at the research site. This session aimed to help the staff to develop an awareness of children's right to play and an understanding of the research findings. The purpose of feeding back to the research findings to the staff involved at the research site was to use the findings to inform an action plan that the staff could enact to improve playtime provision at their setting.

## **Evaluation of Impact**

The following section will consider an evaluation of the impact of the various methods of dissemination from paper one and paper two. In terms of impact, the DECP position statement (Hobbs et al., 2019) has had coverage in the Times, Independent and Telegraph newspapers. Some early statistics about the performance of the DECP position statement on play:

- Approximately 12,000 reads of the BPS news article
- Tens of thousands of impressions on twitter
- 10,000 engagements on Facebook, 500+ shares, 200+ comments
- Coverage in Times, Independent and Telegraph newspapers

Following the publication of the position statement the British Psychological Society (BPS) decided to produce a video to further promote children's right to play (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dGjaTWF3KY>). This video has attracted extensive media coverage and has had 3632 views, was played to the entire DECP conference in January 2020 and was featured in several newspapers.

The 'Play for Wales' magazine has a wide readership. The magazine was freely accessible and shared on the website and Facebook which has 4,863 followers and was shared nine times.

Comments given by attendees to the DECP conference session included that "the session was very interesting". One attendee initiated email contact stating:

Good Morning, I attended the DECP conference at the end of last week and was really interested in the work being carried out at the University of Manchester around children's perceptions of playtime. I wondered if it would be possible to have access to the slides that were presented at the conference? I work at a play-based research centre and would really

like to be able to share them with my colleagues when I give a summary of the conference. I look forward to hearing from you. The researcher therefore replied to the attendee thanking her for her attending the workshop and for her interest and sent her the slides as she had requested. The slides for the workshop were also made freely available to attendees through the event webpage (<https://www.kc-jones.co.uk/decp2020>).

Paper one and paper two have been submitted to the DECP special edition and the researcher is waiting to hear if they have been accepted (appendix F).

The most direct impact of the research was on the research site of paper two. The researcher and the child co-researchers fed back the findings of the research and then the stakeholder group created an action plan (appendix M). It was agreed that the actions would be reviewed in the spring term and new actions were to have been created. Due to time constraints within the school and one member of staff from the stakeholder team leaving the school, staff were not able to review the actions in a face to face context and instead sent a brief email describing how they thought the actions had gone, “Well thanks! The activities have engaged the children and the buddies have taken on a new approach! Thanks for the work this year, good luck!!”

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Ethical approval letter



Environment, Education and Development School Panel PGR  
 School for Environment, Education and Development  
 Humanities Bridgeford Street 1.17  
 The University of Manchester  
 Manchester  
 M13 9PL  
 Email: PGR.ethics.seed@manchester.ac.uk

Ref: 2018-4555-7123

24/09/2018

Dear Miss Sian Bristow, , Dr Cathy Atkinson

**Study Title:** Playground intervention and well-being

Environment, Education and Development School Panel PGR

I write to thank you for submitting the final version of your documents for your project to the Committee on 21/09/2018 14:37 . I am pleased to confirm a favourable ethical opinion for the above research on the basis described in the application form and supporting documentation as submitted and approved by the Committee.

Please see below for a table of the titles, version numbers and dates of all the final approved documents for your project:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Letters of Permission	TEP DBS 1	07/06/2018	1
Letters of Permission	TEP DBS 2	07/06/2018	1
Consent Form	1. CONSENT FORM parent carer (child co-researcher)	18/07/2018	1
Consent Form	3. CONSENT FORM parent carer (child participant)	18/07/2018	1
Participant Information Sheet	1. Parent carer information sheet (child co-researcher)	18/07/2018	1
Participant Information Sheet	3. Parent carer information sheet (child participant)	18/07/2018	1
Consent Form	2. Assent sheet - child co-researcher	18/07/2018	1
Consent Form	4. Assent sheet - child	18/07/2018	1
Participant Information Sheet	2. Info sheet (child co-researcher)	18/07/2018	1
Participant Information Sheet	4. Info sheet (child)	18/07/2018	1
Additional docs	Data management plan - T2	14/08/2018	1
Additional docs	ethics additional doc	21/09/2018	1
Additional docs	Changes made to ethics 21	21/09/2018	1

This approval is effective for a period of five years and is on delegated authority of the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) however please note that it is only valid for the specifications of the research project as outlined in the approved documentation set. If the project continues beyond the 5 year period or if you wish to propose any changes to the methodology or any other specifics within the project an application to seek an amendment must be submitted for review. Failure to do so could invalidate the insurance and constitute research misconduct.

You are reminded that, in accordance with University policy, any data carrying personal identifiers must be encrypted when not held on a secure university computer or kept securely as a hard copy in a location which is accessible only to those involved with the research.

For those undertaking research requiring a DBS Certificate: As you have now completed your ethical application if required a colleague at the University of Manchester will be in touch for you to undertake a DBS check. Please note that you do not have DBS approval until you have received a DBS Certificate completed by the University of Manchester, or you are an MA Teach First student who holds a DBS certificate for your current teaching role.

### Reporting Requirements:

You are required to report to us the following:

1. [Amendments](#)
2. [Breaches and adverse events](#)

We wish you every success with the research.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Kate Rowlands

Environment, Education and Development School Panel PGR

## Appendix B: Amendments ethical approval email

**\*\*Please ensure you read the contents of this message. This email has been sent via the Ethical Review Manager (ERM) system on behalf of the University of Manchester.\*\***

Dear Miss Sian Bristow,

Thank you for submitting your amendment request for project: 2018-4555-7406 ; entitled: Playground intervention and well-being which has now been approved. Your documentation has been suitably updated to reflect the proposed changes, please ensure you use this documentation.

Please note that if you have submitted revised supporting documents to accompany your amendment request, the approved versions of these are listed in a table below.

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Additional docs	3. CONSENT FORM parent carer CA comments	31/10/2018	1
Additional docs	4. Info sheet + CA comments	31/10/2018	1
Additional docs	Collaborative data analysis process + CA comments	31/10/2018	1
Additional docs	Data collection design + CA comments	31/10/2018	1
Additional docs	Focus group questions + CA comments	31/10/2018	1
Additional docs	Focus group script and ground rules + CA comments	31/10/2018	1
Additional docs	Opt out letter	31/10/2018	1

We wish you every success with the research.

Best wishes,

Dr Kate Rowlands

Environment, Education and Development School Panel PGR

## Appendix C: Paper two consent form



### Involving children as co-researchers to improve playtime provision and well-being in Primary School

#### CONSENT FORM

If you are happy for your child to participate within this research please complete and sign the consent form below.

**Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.	
2. I understand that my child's participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw them at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to my/their treatment/service/self.	
3. I understand that my child's data will remain confidential. Only the other children/ researcher and co researchers in the focus group will know what my child has said.	
4. I agree that my child can be audio-recorded and that the co-researchers (Year 5 children) can conduct focus groups with my child if they are supervised by the Trainee Educational Psychologist.	
5. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes.	
6. I agree that my child's views can be used and typed up (by a transcriber) for reports and shared with professionals in the school and/ or the Local Authority, if their name and personal information are removed.	

7.	I agree that any data collected may be passed to other researchers (in anonymous form).	
8.	I agree that the resulting research can be published with the name of the Local Authority, school and my child's name anonymised.	

I agree for my child to take part in the above project

\_\_\_\_\_  
Child's name:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Parent/Carer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of researcher:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Sian Bristow

\_\_\_\_\_  
**This Project Has Been Approved by the University of Manchester's Research Ethics Committee [UREC reference number 2018-4555-7123].**

## Appendix D: Paper two child co-researcher assent sheet

Assent sheet

Hi, my name is Siân 😊

You have had an information sheet telling you about this research.

We would like a group of students to work with me as researchers to look at playtime at your school.

The hope is that we will make changes to playtimes based on the research.

Do you have any questions?

Are you happy to take part as a researcher?



No, not  
happy at all



Not sure



Yes, totally  
happy

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E: Paper two child participant assent sheet

Assent sheet

Hi, my name is Siân 😊

I am working with some students at your school to look at playtimes.

The students would like to [insert chosen research method here, e.g. focus group/interview/observation etc.] .

What you tell us will hopefully help other children in their playtimes at other schools. We hope to make changes to your playtime based on what you say.

Do you have any questions?

Are you happy to take part ?



No, not happy at all



Not sure



Yes, totally happy

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F: Author guidelines for the DECP



## **Educational and Child Psychology 37(3)**

### **Right to play**

#### **Guidelines for authors**

##### **Instructions for authors**

These guidelines are provided to assist authors, referees and editors. Compliance in all respects is appreciated. Please note that papers not adhering to these guidelines may be returned for further amendment prior to review.

Manuscripts are accepted for consideration on the understanding that they consist of the authors' original unpublished work that is not being submitted for consideration elsewhere.

##### **Submitting the manuscript**

Please email manuscripts by **1<sup>st</sup> February 2020**. It may not be possible for the editors to consider late submissions.

Please ensure that manuscripts are prepared according to the following criteria.

- Presented as a Word document.
- Written in Times New Roman, 12 point font, double-spaced, with left and right margins of at least 2.5cm
- Page numbers at the bottom, centre of each page.
- Line numbers should be included, to allow reviewers to make precise reference to the text. These can be added via the 'Layout' function of Word. Please select the 'Restart Each Page' function.

- Please provide author details and affiliations on a separate title page, and send this as a separate file, along with an anonymised manuscript to allow anonymised review.
- The submission should be accompanied by a signed letter, confirming that all authors approve the submission and that the paper is their original work and not under consideration elsewhere.

### **The Abstract**

Papers must be prefaced with an abstract of not more than 250 words and should be structured as follows: aim(s); method; findings; limitations; conclusions.

### **Length**

The main body of text should usually be of between 3500 and 5000 words in lengths, although papers outside this range may be considered at the editors' discretion. Authors must indicate the word-length of papers, with and without the reference section, excluding any tables or figures.

### **Style**

Presentation of papers should conform to the British Psychological Society's 'Style Guide' which is available at <https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/bps-style-guide-authors-and-editors>. Please pay careful attention to this document and note that manuscripts which are not prepared in accordance with this guidance may be returned for further amendment, before they are sent out for review. A quick guide should be provided alongside these guidelines.

### **Refereeing**

All papers are usually read by two referees, in addition to a member of the editorial team. The refereeing process is anonymous. It is important, therefore, that all submissions conform to the above guidelines. The referees' comments will, at the editors' discretion, be passed intact to the authors.

## References

This often gives Editors and the authors themselves more extra work than any other single item. People who write for ECP range from experienced authors to those for whom it is their first journal publication. The former tend to use the referencing conventions they are most used to (most commonly APA); the latter tend to pay too little attention to the need for precise referencing syntax. Please *study carefully* the referencing style of the BPS as detailed fully in the Style Guide as attached. Especially when in doubt, you will find the correct form there. BPS style is different from APA. For example, more than two authors is always '*et al.*' from its first appearance in the text, and *et al.* is italicised (both contrary to APA).

It may at this stage look over-prescriptive, but please look at the two examples provided on the next page, together with the notes arising from them. As well as covering the issues that arise most often in two of the most common types of references, the notes will serve to highlight that it is very important to pay very precise attention to the details of the syntax.

### ***Sample reference – journal article and chapter in book***

*Follow this guidance carefully and there is less likelihood your manuscript will be returned to fix references*

1 Journal article:

Plomin, R., Haworth, C.M., Meaburn, E.L. & Price, T.S. (2013). Common DNA markers can account for more than half of the genetic influence on cognitive abilities. *Psychological Science*, 24(4), 562–568.

Please note the following syntax details:

Comma after surname; full stop and comma after initial until second last and last authors (full stop only).

If two initials, full stop but no extra space between.

Date in brackets followed by full stop. Full stop after article title.

Article title in lower case (except initial letter or proper names). If there's a subtitle, use colon then initial capital.

No emphasis except for name of journal and volume number (not issue number) – italics.

Spell out journal names in full; do not use abbreviations.

Note: if author name is usually and abbreviation (like DfES), spell it out fully the first time and also use the full version in text references and end references – Department for Education and Science (2001).

Please note the precise syntax that constitutes the journal name, volume number, issue number and page numbers. Put all page numbers in full.

2 Chapter in book:

Petrie, K. (1981). Life stress and illness: Formulation of the issue. In B.S. Dohrenwend & B.P. Dohrenwend (Eds.) *Stressful life events and their context* (Rev. edn., pp.345–401). New York: Wiley.

Please follow all that applies to journal articles but note these points:

It is the title of the book that is italicised.

The title is lower case (except as noted above for journal article titles).

Note order of layout. After article title and full stop, say: In... starting with the authors' initials before surname, followed by (Ed.) or (Eds.). Then title of book, brackets to show edition (if applicable) and page numbers. Again note syntax: 'edn.,' 'pp.345' (no space after pp.).

Final show the town of publication and publisher as indicated.

## **Appendix G: Paper one list of excluded studies and reasons**

	Database	Inclusion criteria not met
Anderson-Butcher, D., Newsome, W., & Nay, S. (2003). Social skills intervention during elementary school recess: A visual analysis. <i>Children &amp; Schools</i> , 25(3), 135–146.	ASSIA Psychinfo ERIC	-
Anderson, D., Trinh, S., Caldarella, P., Hansen, B., & Richardson, M. (2018). Increasing Positive Playground Interaction for Kindergarten Students at Risk for Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. <i>Early Childhood Education Journal</i> , 46(5), 487–496.	Psychinfo	Criteria 1 & 5
Armitage, M. (2005). The Influence of School Architecture and Design on the Outdoor Play Experience within the Primary School. <i>Paedagogica Historica</i> , 41(4-5), 535–553.	ERIC	Criterion 4
Bark, K., Stenberg, M., Sutherland, S., & Hayes, D. (2010). Scheduling Recess before Lunch: Exploring the Benefits and Challenges in Montana Schools. <i>Journal of Child Nutrition &amp; Management</i> , 34(2), 1–8.	ERIC	Criterion 4
Beni, K. (2013) Teachers', Administrators', and Students' Perception of Recess at Public Elementary Schools: A Mixed Method Study Using Online Surveys, Interview Questions, and Students' Essays with Drawings (Unpublished doctoral thesis). Indiana: University of Pennsylvania.	ERIC	Criteria 4 & 8
Benton-Murray, J.M. (1994). <i>Increasing the Growth in Prosocial, Nonviolent, Problem-Solving Skills of Kindergarten Students through Conflict Resolution Skills</i> . Nove Southeaster University.	ERIC	Criterion 7
Blatchford, P., Creeser, R., & Mooney, A. (1990). Playground games and playtime: the children's view. <i>Educational Research</i> , 32(3), 163–174.	ERIC	Criterion 7
Bleeker, M., James-Burdumy, S., Beyler, N., Dodd, A., London, R., Westrich, L. & Castrechini, S. (2012). Findings from a randomized experiment of Playworks: Selected results from cohort. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research.	ERIC	Criterion 8
Borman, K. & Barrett, D. (1981) <i>Negotiating playground games</i> (Final Report, NIE G-79-0123), Washington, D.C.: National institute of Education	ERIC	Criterion 7
Brock, M., Dueker, S., & Barczak, M. (2018). Brief Report: Improving Social Outcomes for Students with Autism at Recess Through Peer-Mediated Pivotal Response Training. <i>Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders</i> , 48(6), 2224–2230.	ASSIA	Criterion 5
Bundy, A., Luckett, T., Naughton, G., Tranter, P., Wyver, S., Ragen, J. & Bundy, A. (2008). Playful interaction: occupational therapy for all children on the school playground. <i>The American Journal of Occupational Therapy: Official Publication of the American Occupational Therapy Association</i> , 62(5), 522–527.	ASSIA	Criterion 3

Bundy, A., Engelen, L., Wyver, S., Tranter, P., Ragen, J., Bauman, A., ... Naughton, G. (2017). Sydney Playground Project: A Cluster-Randomized Trial to Increase Physical Activity, Play, and Social Skills. <i>Journal of School Health</i> , 87(10), 751–759.	ASSIA	Criterion 3
Butcher, D. A. (1999). Enhancing social skills through school social work interventions during recess: Gender differences. <i>Social Work in Education</i> , 21, 249-262.	ASSIA ERIC	Criterion 7
Calo, K. & Ingram, P (1994). Playground Leaders (Report no: ED 376 984). Maine: Maine Centre for Educational Services.	ERIC	Criterion 7
Campbell, A. (2012) A case study of teachers' recess practices related to students with exceptional learning needs (Unpublished master's thesis). Rochester Institute of Technology, New York.	ERIC	Criterion 8
Chawla, L., Keena, K., Pevec, I., & Stanley, E. (2014). Green schoolyards as havens from stress and resources for resilience in childhood and adolescence. <i>Health and Place</i> , 28, 1–13.	Psychinfo	Criterion 4
Cuccaro, C., & Geitner, G. (2007). Lunch and recess: The "eye of the storm": Using targeted interventions for students with behavioral problems. <i>Teaching Exceptional Children Plus</i> , 2 (4).	ERIC	Criteria 4 & 5
Cunningham, C., Cunningham, L., Martorelli, V., Tran, A., Young, J., & Zacharias, R. (1998). The Effects of Primary Division, Student-mediated Conflict Resolution Programs on Playground Aggression. <i>Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry</i> , 39(5), 653–662.	ASSIA EBSCo	Criterion 7
Donder, D., & Nietupski, J. (1981). Nonhandicapped Adolescents Teaching Playground Skills to Their Mentally Retarded Peers: Toward a Less Restrictive Middle School Environment. <i>Education and Training of the Mentally Retarded</i> , 16(4), 270–276.	ERIC	Criterion 7
Downes, E. (2013). Reducing disruptive behavior during lunchtime in urban elementary students: A comparison of two school-based lunchtime interventions (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Massachusetts: North eastern University.	Psychinfo	Criterion 4
Eddy, J. M., Feldman, B. J., & Martinez, C. R., Jr. (2016). Short and long term impacts of a coercion theory-based intervention on aggression on the school playground. In T. J. Dishion & J. Snyder (Eds.), <i>The Oxford handbook of coercive relationship dynamics</i> . Oxford Library of Psychology (pp. 286–299). New York: Oxford University Press.	Psychinfo	Criterion 4
Edwards, K. (2006). Sharing spaces: school playground design and children's well-being. <i>Journal of Public Mental Health</i> , 5(1), 18–23.	ASSIA	-
Evans, K. & Eversole, D. (1992) Children as conflict managers. <i>Journal of Emotional and Behavioural Problems</i> , 1(2), 39-40.	ERIC	Criterion 7
Factor, J. (2004). Tree Stumps, Manhole Covers and Rubbish Tins: The Invisible Play-Lines of a Primary School Playground. <i>Childhood</i> , 11(2), 142–154.	ASSIA	Criterion 4

Farmer, V., Fitzgerald, S., Williams, J. Schofield, G., McPhee, J. & Taylor, R. (2017). What Did Schools Experience from Participating in a Randomised Controlled Study (PLAY) That Prioritised Risk and Challenge in Active Play for Children While at School? <i>Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning</i> , 17(3), 238-257.	ERIC	Criterion 4
Farmer, V., Williams, S., Mann, J., Schofield, G., McPhee, J. & Taylor, R. (2017). Change of school playground environment on bullying: A randomized controlled trial. <i>Pediatrics</i> , 139(5).	Reference harvesting	-
Filella, G., Pérez, N., Cabello, E., & Ros-Morente, A. (2016). Evaluation of the Emotional Education Program "Happy 8-12" for the Assertive Resolution of Conflicts among Peers. <i>Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology</i> , 14(3), 582-601.	ERIC	Criterion 6
Franzen, K., & Kamps, D. (2008). The Utilization and Effects of Positive Behavior Support Strategies on an Urban School Playground. <i>Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions</i> , 10(3), 150–161	ERIC	-
Freeman, L., Locke, J., Rotheram-Fuller, E., & Mandell, D. (2017). Brief Report: Examining Executive and Social Functioning in Elementary-Aged Children with Autism. <i>Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders</i> , 47(6), 1890–1895.	Psychinfo	Criterion 5
Frey, K., Hirschstein, M., Snell, J., Edstrom, L., Mackenzie, E., Broderick, C., & Frey, K. (2005). Reducing playground bullying and supporting beliefs: an experimental trial of the steps to respect program. <i>Developmental Psychology</i> , 41(3), 479–490	ASSIA ERIC	-
Gallacher, K. (2011). "Playground Pals" and Peer Mediation at Benarty Primary School, Scotland. <i>International Journal on School Disaffection</i> , 8(2), 42-43.	ERIC	Criterion 4
Griffin, A., Caldarella, P., Sabey, C., & Heath, M. (2017). The effects of a buddy bench on elementary students' solitary behavior during recess. <i>International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education</i> , 10(1), 27–36.	ERIC	-
Harper, C., Symon, J., & Frea, W. (2008). Recess is Time-in: Using Peers to Improve Social Skills of Children with Autism. <i>Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders</i> , 38(5), 815–826	ASSIA Psychinfo ERIC	Criterion 5
Hyndman, B., Benson, A., & Telford, A. (2014). A Guide for Educators to Move beyond Conventional School Playgrounds: The RE-AIM Evaluation of the Lunchtime Enjoyment Activity and Play (LEAP) Intervention. <i>Australian Journal of Teacher Education</i> , 39(1), 1–30.	ERIC	Criterion 3
James-Burdumy, S., Bleeker, M., Beyler, N., London, R. A., Westrich, L., Stokes-Guinan, K., Castrechini, S. (2013). Does playworks work? Findings from a randomized controlled trail (Report no. ED563086). Virginia: Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness.	ERIC	Criterion 3

iménez-Barbero, J., Ruiz-Hernández, J., Llor-Esteban, B., Llor-Zaragoza, L., & Pérez García, M. (2013). Efficacy of a brief intervention on attitudes to reduce school violence: A randomized clinical trial. <i>Children and Youth Services Review</i> , 35(9), 1313–1318.	EBSCo	Criterion 4
Johnson, J. & Reed, F. (1996) Improving Student's Ability To Resolve Conflict (Unpublished master's thesis). Massachusetts: Northeastern university.	ERIC	Criterion 8
Johnson, P. (2013). Schoolyard Geographies: The Influence of Object-Play and Place-Making on Relationships. <i>Review of International Geographical Education Online</i> , 3(1), 77-92.	ERIC	Criterion 3
Josephson, H. L. (2006). Fostering the social development of shy students: A preventative intervention study. Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, 66, 3929.	Psychinfo	Criterion 4
Kasali, A., & Doğan, F. (2010). Fifth-, sixth-, and seventh-grade students' use of non-classroom spaces during recess: The case of three private schools in Izmir, Turkey. <i>Journal of Environmental Psychology</i> , 30(4), 518–532.	ASSIA	Criterion 4
Kasari, C., Dean, M., Kretzmann, M., Shih, W., Orlich, F., Whitney, R. & King, B. (2016). Children with autism spectrum disorder and social skills groups at school: a randomized trial comparing intervention approach and peer composition. <i>Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry</i> , 57(2), 171–179.	ASSIA	Criterion 5
Kim, H. (1995). Steps and Practical Guidelines for Developing and Implementing Self-Management Programs for Children's Social Behavior on the Playgrounds (Report no. ED385029). Oregon: Oregon University.	ERIC	Criterion 7
Kretzmann, M., Shih, W., & Kasari, C. (2015). Improving Peer Engagement of Children With Autism on the School Playground: A Randomized Controlled Trial. <i>Behavior Therapy</i> , 46(1), 20–28.	ASSIA EBSCo Psychinfo	Criterion 5
Kucksar, (2018). A comparison of the effects of video modeling other and peer-implemented pivotal response training to video modeling other on positive social interactions of young children with developmental disabilities (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Las Vegas: University of Nevada.	Psychinfo ERIC	Criterion 5
Leff, S., Costigan, T., & Power, T. (2004). Using participatory research to develop a playground-based prevention program. <i>Journal of School Psychology</i> , 42(1), 3–21.	ERIC	-
Leff, S., Power, T., Costigan, T., & Manz, P. (2003). Assessing the climate of the playground and lunchroom: Implications for bullying prevention programming. <i>School Psychology Review</i> , 32(3), 418–430.	ERIC	Criterion 4
Levine (2012). Problems on the Playground: A Different Approach to Recess (Report no. EJ975537). USA: National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP).	ERIC	Criterion 8



Lewis, T., Colvin, G. & Sugai, G. (2000). The effects of pre-correction and active supervision on the recess behaviour of elementary students. <i>Education and Treatment of Children</i> , 23(2), 109-121.	Reference harvesting	-
Lewis, T., Powers, L., Kely, M., Newcomer, L., Bray, M., & Stormont, M. (2002). Reducing problem behaviors on the playground: An investigation of the application of schoolwide positive behavior supports. <i>Psychology in the Schools</i> , 39(2), 181–190.	ERIC	-
Liu, L., Huang, R., Chang, C., & Liu, C. (2017). The design consideration of outdoor playground: from Elementary School Student’s perceived attraction and satisfaction. <i>Studies on Ethno-Medicine</i> , 11(1), 35–44.	ASSIA	Criterion 4
Locke, J., Williams, J., Shih, W., & Kasari, C. (2017). Characteristics of socially successful elementary school-aged children with autism. <i>Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry</i> , 58(1), 94–102.	EBSCo	Criterion 5
London, R., Westrich, L., Stokes-Guinan, K., & Mclaughlin, M. (2015). Playing Fair: The Contribution of High-Functioning Recess to Overall School Climate in Low-Income Elementary Schools. <i>Journal of School Health</i> , 85(1), 53–60.	ASSIA	Criterion 4
Low, S., Frey, K., & Brockman, C. (2010). Gossip on the Playground: Changes Associated With Universal Intervention, Retaliation Beliefs, and Supportive Friends. <i>School Psychology Review</i> , 39(4), 536–551.	ERIC	-
Machalicek, W., Shogren, K., Lang, R., Rispoli, M., O’reilly, M., Franco, J., & Sigafos, J. (2009). Increasing play and decreasing the challenging behavior of children with autism during recess with activity schedules and task correspondence training. <i>Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders</i> , 3(2), 547–555.	Psychinfo	Criterion 5
Marchant, M., Solano, B., Fisher, A., Caldarella, P., Young, K., & Renshaw, T. (2007). Modifying socially withdrawn behavior: A playground intervention for students with internalizing behaviors. <i>Psychology in the Schools</i> , 44(8), 779–794.	ASSIA Psychinfo ERIC	Criterion 5
Marple, S. (2011). Recess, Playground Games, and the Aims of School: An Investigation into the Semiotic Affordances of Four Square (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of California, Los Angeles.	ERIC	Criterion 8
Marsh, K., & Dieckmann, S. (2017). Contributions of playground singing games to the social inclusion of refugee and newly arrived immigrant children in Australia. <i>Education 3-13: Music Education</i> , 45(6), 710–719.	Psychinfo ERIC	Criterion 5
Mason, R., Kamps, D., Turcotte, A., Cox, S., Feldmiller, S., & Miller, T. (2014). Peer mediation to increase communication and interaction at recess for students with autism spectrum disorders. <i>Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders</i> , 8(3), 334–344.	Psychinfo	Criterion 5

Mayfield, C., Child, S., Weaver, R., Zarrett, N., Beets, M., & Moore, J. (2017). Effectiveness of a Playground Intervention for Antisocial, Prosocial, and Physical Activity Behaviors. <i>Journal of School Health, 87</i> (5), 338–345.	ASSIA ERIC	Criterion 3
Miller, L., Schoen, S., Camarata, S., McConkey, J., Kanics, I., Valdez, A. & Hampton, S. (2017.) Play in Natural Environments: A Pilot Study Quantifying the Behavior of Children on Playground Equipment. <i>Journal of Occupational Therapy, Schools &amp; Early Intervention, 10</i> (3), 1-19.	ERIC	Criterion 4
Murphy, H., Hutchison, J., & Bailey, J. (1983). Behavioural school psychology goes outdoors: The effect of organised games on playground aggression. <i>Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 16</i> (1), 29–35.	ERIC	Criterion 7
Newton, A (1993). Students as Mediators (Report no. ED 361 631). Maine: Maine Centre for Educational Services.	ERIC	Criterion 7
Norðdahl, K., & Einarsdóttir, J. (2015). Children’s views and preferences regarding their outdoor environment. <i>Journal of Adventure Education &amp; Outdoor Learning, 15</i> (2), 152–167.	ERIC	Criterion 4
O’Connell, P., Pepler, D., & Craig, W. (1999). Peer involvement in bullying: insights and challenges for intervention. <i>Journal of Adolescence, 22</i> (4), 437–452.	ERIC	Criteria 4 & 7
O’Hara, M., & Hall, L. (2014). Increasing Engagement of Students with Autism at Recess through Structured Work Systems. <i>Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities, 49</i> (4), 568–575.	ERIC	Criterion 5
Oh-Young, C. (2017). A comparison of the effects of peer networks and peer video modelling on positive social interactions performed by young children with developmental disabilities (Unpublished master’s thesis). University of Nevada, Las Vegas.	Psychinfo	Criterion 5
Osborn, C. & Kasari, C. (2015). Increasing playground engagement in special education students with autism utilizing an aide-mediated social skills intervention (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Los Angeles: University of California.	Psychinfo	Criterion 5
Paine (1978). The Effects of Repeated Treatment on the Maintenance of Social Behavior (Report no. 162243). Oregon: Oregon University.	ERIC	Criterion 7
Parkhurst, K. (1988). Supplementing assertive discipline with conflict resolution to develop social skills at the intermediate level. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Nova University, Fort Lauderdale.	ERIC	Criterion 8
Pryor, L. (1994) Improving Students' Social Interaction with Adults and Peers by Creating a Caring Community: Strategies for Resolving Conflict in the Elementary School (Unpublished thesis). Los Angeles: University of California.	ERIC	Criteria 7 & 8
Radley, K., Ford, W., Battaglia, A., & Mchugh, M. (2014). The Effects of a Social Skills Training Package on Social Engagement of Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders in a	Psychinfo ERIC	Criterion 5

Generalized Recess Setting. <i>Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities</i> , 29(4), 216–229.		
Ren, J., & Langhout, R. (2010). A Recess Evaluation with the Players: Taking Steps Toward Participatory Action Research. <i>American Journal of Community Psychology</i> , 46(1-2), 124–138.	EBSCo	Criterion 4
Reumann-Moore, R., & Suess, G. (2006). Children at play: An evaluation of EW/NSC's socialized recess program (Report). USA: Research for Action.	ERIC	Criterion 8
Rosenberg, N., Congdon, M., Schwartz, I., & Kamps, D. (2015). Use of Say-Do Correspondence Training to Increase Generalization of Social Interaction Skills at Recess for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. <i>Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities</i> , 50(2), 213–222.	Psychinfo	Criterion 5
Sharkey, J., Hunnicut, K., Mayworm, A., Schiedel, K. & Calcagnotto, L. (2014). Effective yard supervision: From needs assessment to customized training. <i>Journal of Contemporary School Psychology</i> 18(2), 103-116.	Psychinfo ERIC	Criterion 4
Stanley, E. (2018). Monkey brains and monkey bars: An ecological approach to the values of school recess. Antioch New England: Antioch University.	Psychinfo	Criterion 5
Teerlink, E., Caldarella, P., Anderson, D., Richardson, M., & Guzman, E. (2017). Addressing Problem Behavior at Recess Using Peer Praise Notes. <i>Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions</i> , 19(2), 115–126.	Psychinfo ERIC	-
Thomas, J. R., Lee, A. M., McGee, L., & Silverman, S. (1987). Effects of individual and group contingencies on disruptive playground behavior. <i>Journal of Research and Development in Education</i> , 20, 66-76.	ERIC	Criterion 7
Todd, A., Haugen, L., Anderson, K. & Spriggs, M. (2002) Teaching recess: Low-cost efforts producing effective results. <i>Journal of Positive Behaviour Interventions</i> , 4(1), 46-52.	Reference harvesting	-
Veiga, G., Leng, W., Cachucho, R., Ketelaar, L., Kok, J., Knobbe, A., Neto, C & Rieftee, C. (2017). Social Competence at the Playground: Preschoolers during Recess. <i>Infant and Child Development</i> , 26, 1-15.	ERIC	Criterion 4
Vialet, J. (2008). The elephant on the playground. <i>Principal</i> , 38-41.	ERIC	Criteria 4 & 8
Vincent, L., Openden, D., Gentry, J., Long, L., & Matthews, N. (2018). Promoting Social Learning at Recess for Children with ASD and Related Social Challenges. <i>Behavior Analysis in Practice</i> , 11(1), 19–33.	Psychinfo	Criterion 5
Visser, J., & Greenwood, I. (2005). The effect of playground games, as agents for changing playground ethos, on playground disputes. <i>Education</i> , 33(2), 27–30.	ERIC	-

Weinstein, C., Pinciotti, P., & Weinstein, C. (1988). Changing a schoolyard: intentions, design decisions, and behavioral outcomes. <i>Environment and Behavior</i> , 20(May 88), 345–371.	ASSIA	Criterion 7
Welch, G. (1989). How we keep our playground from becoming a battlefield. <i>Executive Educator</i> , 11, 23–31.	ERIC	Criterion 7
Yuill, N., Strieth, S., Roake, C., Aspden, R., & Todd, B. (2007). Brief Report: Designing a Playground for Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders—Effects on Playful Peer Interactions. <i>Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders</i> , 37(6), 1192–1196.	ASSIA	Criterion 5 ASD
Ziv, N., & Dolev, E. (2013). The Effect of Background Music on Bullying: A Pilot Study. <i>Children &amp; Schools</i> , 35(2), 83–90.	ASSIA ERIC	-

## Appendix H: Paper one weights of evidence

WOE A	Score	Notes
Focus on specific, well-defined disorder or problem		
Comparison with treatment-as-usual, placebo, or less preferably, standard control		
Use of manuals/protocol/ training		
Fidelity checking procedures/ supervision of intervention		
Use of outcome measure(s) that has demonstrably good reliability and validity (2 points if more than one measure used)		
Total		

WOE B	Score	Notes
It is a replicable intervention? 2 points = well defined and replicable/ manualized 1 point = enough detail to allow partial replicability 0 points = insufficient detail about the intervention to allow for replicability		
Discriminator about effectiveness 2 points = Data clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of the approach through rigorous statistical analysis including pre and post (e.g. appropriately powered/ effect size/ multiple baseline) 1 point = Data demonstrates the effectiveness of the approach through pre and post analysis. 0 points = Data doesn't specifically indicate the effectiveness of the intervention		
Total		

WOE C	Score	Notes
Well-being or mental health aim of the study 2 points = Explicit aim to improve children's SEMH/ well-being 1 point = Aims to improve children's SEMH/ well-being as one of a number of aims 0 points = No aim to improve children's SEMH/ well-being		
The main focus of the intervention is to address social control 1 point = no 0 points = yes		
Systemic change		

2 points = Systemic change that involves at least three elements 1 point = Systemic change that involves two change elements 0 points = Systemic change that involves one change element		
Skill development - staff 1 point = comprehensively promotes staff development (e.g. training based on need) 0.5 points = partial staff development (e.g. trained to deliver the intervention) 0 points = No skill development		
Skill development – children 1 point = comprehensively promotes child skill development 0.5 points = partial child skill development (e.g. a small level of input around skill development) 0 points = No skill development		
Total		

### WOE A References:

American Psychological Association (APA) (2006). Evidence Based Practice in Psychology, *American Psychologist*, May-June, 271-285.

Woods, K., Bond, C., Humphrey, N., Symes, W., & Green, L. (2011). *Systematic Review of Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) with children and families*. (DfE Research Report RR179). Retrieved on 18.9.14 from <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-RR179>

## **Appendix I: Paper two focus group questions**

- 1) What do you think about playtime?
  - What do you think about playtime at break/ lunch?
  - What do you think about the amount of time that you have at playtime?
  - Do you like to play outside?
  - How many games do you think there should be on the playground?
- 2) What do you like about playtime?
  - What is your favourite game?
  - What do you like to do at break/lunch?
  - What games do you not like?
  - What do you dislike about playtime at break/lunch?
- 3) How do people treat each other at playtime?
  - Why do you think people get put at the top of the steps?
  - What do you think about the dinner ladies and teachers at playtime?
  - How do you feel about playing your friend's games?
  - How do you feel about joining in with the sports leaders' games?
- 4) How do you feel about having other people to play with at playtime?
  - What do you think about the buddy bench?
  - What do you think about playtime buddies?
  - How do you feel about boys and girls playing together?

## **Appendix J: Paper two focus group script and rules**

Focus group script:

My name is Sian Bristow and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of Manchester. As part of my course I am going to be doing a research project. I am interested in what you think about playtime at your school.

We think that playtime at school is important! This group of Year 5 children, who will introduce themselves in a minute, are going to act as researchers and help me do this research. This is because sometimes adults can see things very differently to children and what an adult might want to know about playtime could be very different to what a child might want to know.

If you are agreeing to take part in this group, then you are agreeing to keep what other children say confidential. That means you are agreeing to keep what other pupils in the group have said safe. This means that you will not tell anybody outside of the group what they have said or discuss it after the group has finished.

The information that you tell me will be kept safe. When I tell other people what you have told us about playtime in school, I will do it without using your name or the name of your school.

However, if you say something that worries me about your safety or somebody else's safety I will have to pass that information on. If this is the case, then I will talk to you about it before we talk to your parents/carers and teacher.

You have completely free choice about whether to take part in this research. If you do not want to take part, you do not have to give a reason. If you decide to take part in the research, you can also choose to stop being part of it at any time. Does anybody not want to take part? Does anybody have any questions?

Co-researchers to introduce themselves (name and year group). Then say:

To help us in our group, it would be good to have some ground rules:



## WE WANT YOU TO DO THE TALKING

- Let's hear from everyone!
- One person at a time.
- I may ask you if I haven't heard from you in a while.

## THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS

- Everyone's ideas and experiences are valuable.
- Listen to each other
- It's important to hear all sides – including both positives and negatives.
- We will not always agree, but we must always show respect for one another.

## WHAT IS SHARED IN THIS ROOM STAYS IN THIS ROOM

- We will be recording this session so we don't miss anything.
- Please keep everything you hear today confidential (that means don't tell anybody else).
- We will summarise themes without using your name.

# Appendix K: Paper two observation sheet



Things that help well-being at playtime

Friends:


Games:


How people treat each other:


Other things you notice:


Things that don't help well-being at playtime



Friends:


Games:


How people treat each other:


Other things you notice:


## Appendix L: Presentation to stakeholders



Today

- Background information
- What we did
- What we found
  - Strengths
  - Areas for development
- The evidence base
- Action planning

Background information

Current playtime provision:

- Sports Leaders
- Games
- Football
- Inside activities
- Quiet area – not currently used
- Climbing frame
- Buddy bench
- Field (not used unless there have been two consecutive dry days)
- The children have a rotating lunch

"This is a larger than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those supported through the pupil premium, is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding the school receives for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority. A much larger than average proportion of pupils leaves and joins the school during the course of each year. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average and increasing" Ofsted Report(2015).

**What we did**

- Presented to our class and asked for volunteers
- We met together as a group
- We had training to become co-researchers
- We observed playtime
- We did 4 focus groups
- Our experiences of being a co-researcher

Our experiences of being a co-researcher

- As a job
- How you collect information
- How you share information

- Chatting about the playground
- Being part of a team and making our team poster

Interesting

Fun

- I was surprised that people shared deep things
- Fascinated by how interesting what they said was
- How quiet they were

- I liked having chats
- I liked being part of trying to make the playground better

Fascinating and surprising

Amazing

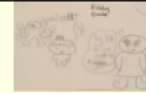
What we found - strengths

- Younger children felt that they don't have to be lonely at playtime  
"all you need to say is, 'Can I play?'"
- The games were helpful for them in making friends  
"...playing games with friends and it could be new friends, old friends, like everyone playing together one big game"
- They liked having sports Leaders  
Co-researcher: "Which games do you like the most?"  
Y1 child: "With the Sports Leaders"
- The climbing frame  
"I like playing on the climbing frame... because it's fun"

### What we found - strengths

- Felt that playtime at Crab Lane was a good opportunity to make friends  
"You can make new friends when you're having a break"
- Felt that playtime gave them an opportunity to have a break from their work  
"You can have a break from learning"
- Felt that staff and LOs tried to help  
"the teaches and the lunchtime organisers can be helpful"
- The younger children (particularly) expressed that they really enjoy playtime  
"Because it's very very fun"
- Children liked spending time with their friends at playtime  
"I enjoy playing with my friends"

### What we found – areas for development



- The buddy bench
  - Some children didn't know about the buddy bench or playtimes buddies "I think that some people just think the buddy bench is a normal bench and they sit on it for any reason"
  - How it's used... "I think that no-one uses it (the buddy bench)"
  - For... "lonely people"
- Peer difficulties
  - How they're treated - "...just being mean to me... they're treating me like dirt..."
  - Physical disputes- "When people are like shouting at you ... kicking and punching you"
  - Being 'left out'/lonely - "I dislike watching people being upset, like just sitting in the corner and listening to people bullying each other 'cause I... 'cause like it's just horrible... like not letting anyone... be friends with you or something"
  - Consequences and consistency between staff- "I don't like lunchtimes because, so, when, when I hurt someone by accident they just tell me off..."
  - Lack of social problem solving skills - "My friends... do usually be nice to me... lot more, but... But I think the next minute... they... they had enough and they... and they kick me..."

### What we found – areas for development

- The nature of the games
  - The number of games on offer  
"I think that there should be more games than there are because if you're just left alone then you can play a game in the playground"
  - The type of games on offer  
"A lot of time I just see people... from like Year 1, from all around the school just walking around by themselves and I think that if they think that the games that we're playing are like not for them, but if we had more games then maybe they'd like to play the games that... are going on"
  - Free play and friends  
"I don't have a favourite game because I like to play with Jane a lot and she's always making new games and we're playing new games all of the time"

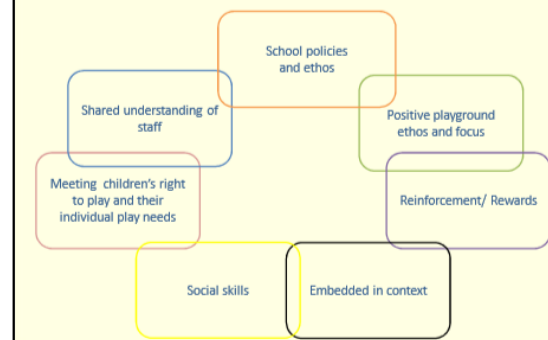
### Evidence base

- Positive play experiences develop children's resilience and well-being – Article 31 UNCRC (Lester & Russell, 2010)
- Social skills training (Butcher, 1999; Butcher, Newsome & Nay, 2003; Low, Frey & Brockman, 2010)
- Teaching specific playground behaviours and games (Todd et al., 2002)
- Reviewing key recess social skills with children, prompting the use of social skills prior to each recess and active playground supervision (Lewis et al., 2000)
- Rewards and positive reinforcement (Butcher, 1999; Roderick, Pitchford & Miller, 1997; Lewis et al., 2000; Lewis et al., 2002)
- Peer praise and reward interventions (Teerlink et al., 2017)
- School-wide positive behaviour support interventions - consistency between school and playground policies

### Evidence base contd.

- Provided structured games and activities (Butcher, 1999; Bullard, 2002; Leff et al., 2004)
- Games provided promoted cooperative not competitive play (Butcher, 1999; Quillitch, 1994)
- Loose parts play (Bundy et al., 2008)
- Calming music (Ziv & Dolev, 2013)
- Student-mediated conflict resolution programs (Cunningham et al., 1998)
- Mixed evidence on the use of buddy benches (Clarke, 2018; Griffin et al., 2017)
- Pupil voice (Ren & Langhout, 2010)
- Staff training (Doll & Brehm, 2010)

### Literature review – overview





**Action setting**

Outcome (what would we like to see)	Action/ intervention	Who?	Where and When?

## Appendix M: Action plan for paper two research site

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Action</b>
To develop a positive reward system at playtime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Senior leader to coordinate with the lunchtime organisers</li> <li>- Senior leader to coordinate with teachers with teachers to explain to children who to access the positive reward system</li> </ul>
For children to have a varied choice of activities to engage with at playtimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Audits for children in the type of activities that they would like to be available at playtimes</li> <li>- Involvement of ‘sports leaders’ in facilitating activities</li> <li>- Sharing materials with lunchtime organisers with a range of games that promote cooperative and varied play</li> </ul>
For children to be able to access mediation from lunchtime organisers or their peers if they want it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peer mediation training for the ‘playground buddies’</li> <li>- Restorative justice training and mediation materials available to the lunchtime organisers</li> </ul>

## Appendix N: Paper two opt out letter

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing to you about the research I am conducting as part of my Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology [to be used for Doctoral thesis submission and publication] at the University of Manchester.

The aim of this research is to develop an understanding of children's playtimes at school to inform intervention to improve their well-being at playtimes.

Some students have been asked to take part in focus groups as part of this research, if you're child has been selected to do this I will have sent you another letter asking for your consent.

A group of Year 5 students at *[insert school name]* have been trained to act as co-researchers in this research. I am writing to you to request your permission for the Year 5 child co-researchers and Siân to observe your child at their playtime. This will happen on the break time of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the 26<sup>th</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

This observation will be discrete and the co-researchers and Siân will aim not to interfere or interrupt your child's play. No personal information (e.g. their name etc.) will be recorded during the observation. However, if Siân or the children are concerned by anything they see during the observation this information will be passed on to a relevant member of staff.

I have approached *[the school your child attends]* and explained the purpose of the study, and the school has kindly agreed to distribute these letters to you.

I hope therefore that you will agree to your child being involved in my research.

If you have any further questions about the research, please contact me on: [sian.bristow-2@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk](mailto:sian.bristow-2@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk). If you have any concerns about the research please contact my supervisor: [cathy.atkinson@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:cathy.atkinson@manchester.ac.uk)

If you would prefer that your child does not take part, please sign and return the form enclosed.

Yours sincerely,

**Sian Bristow**



## **Appendix O: Paper two participatory collaborative data analysis**

Collaborative data analysis process

The researcher = Sian Bristow (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

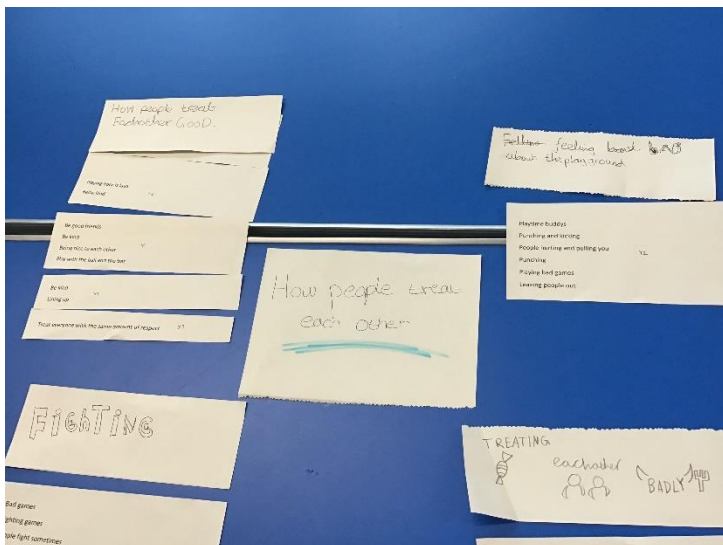
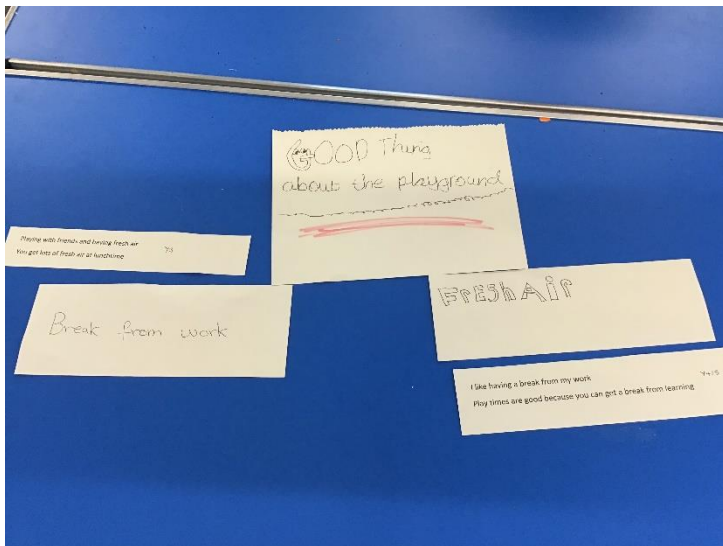
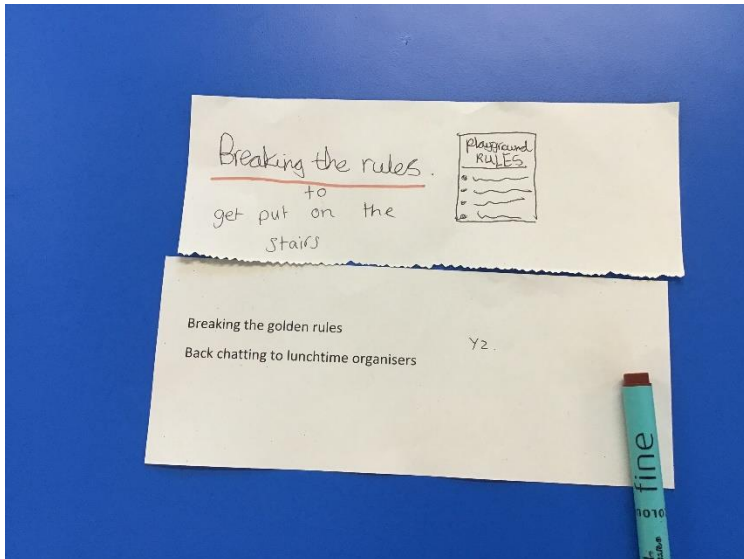
The co-researchers = 4 Year 5 children who have received the 'research training'

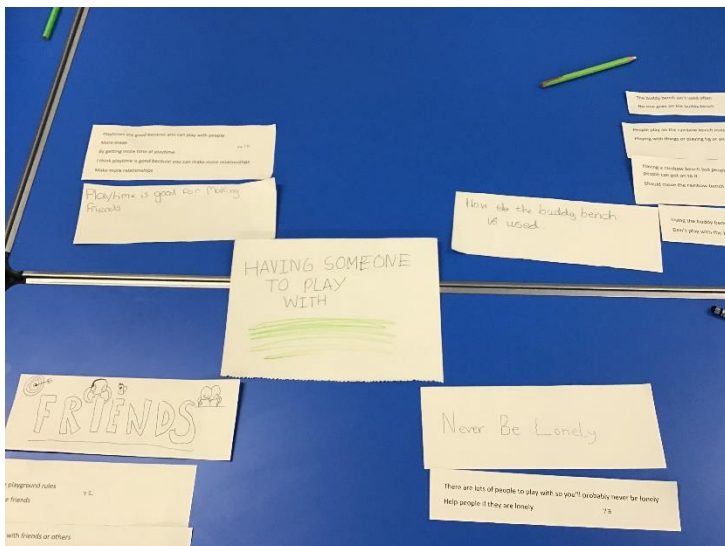
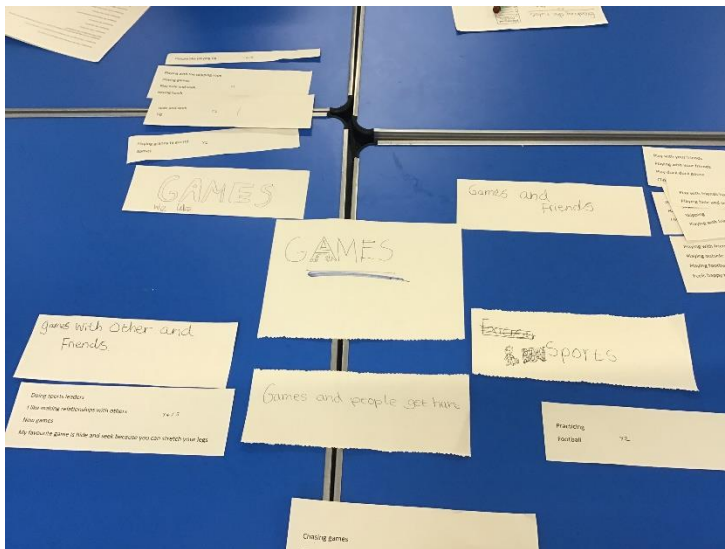
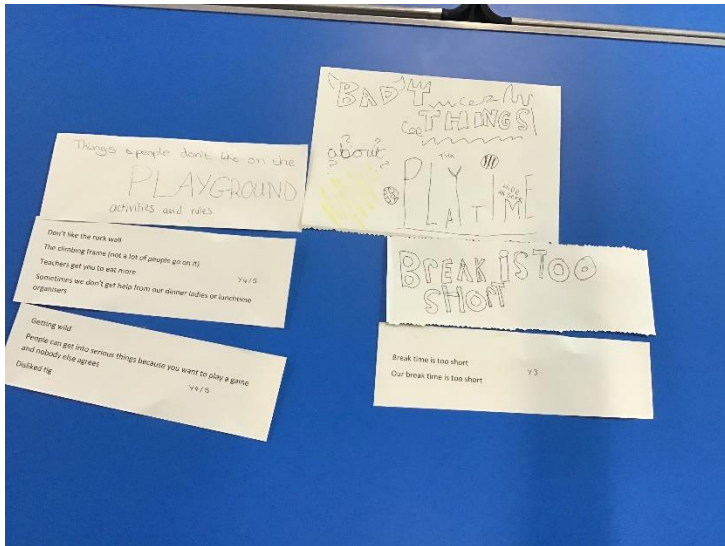
The focus group participants = children from Year 1 to Year 5

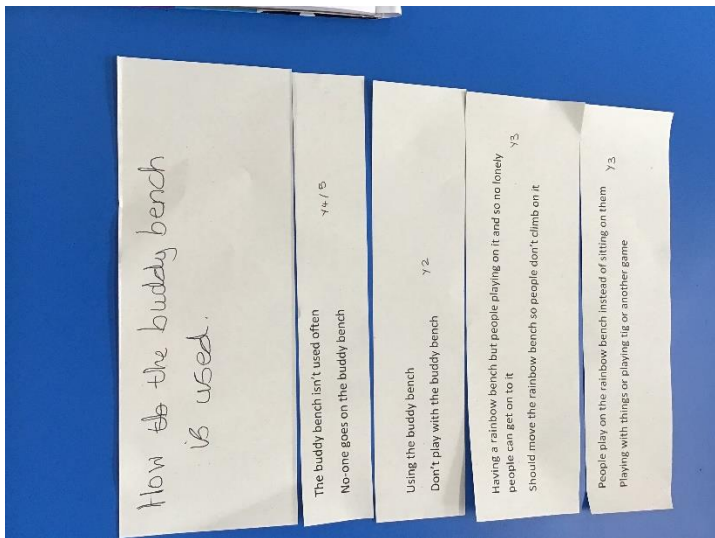
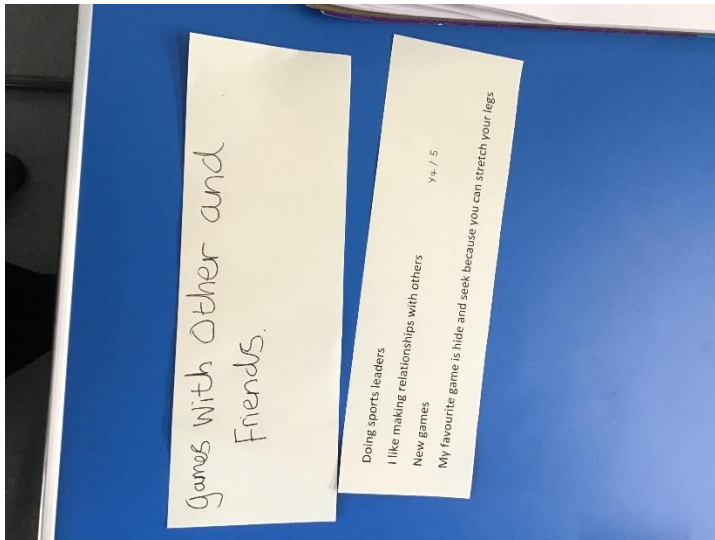
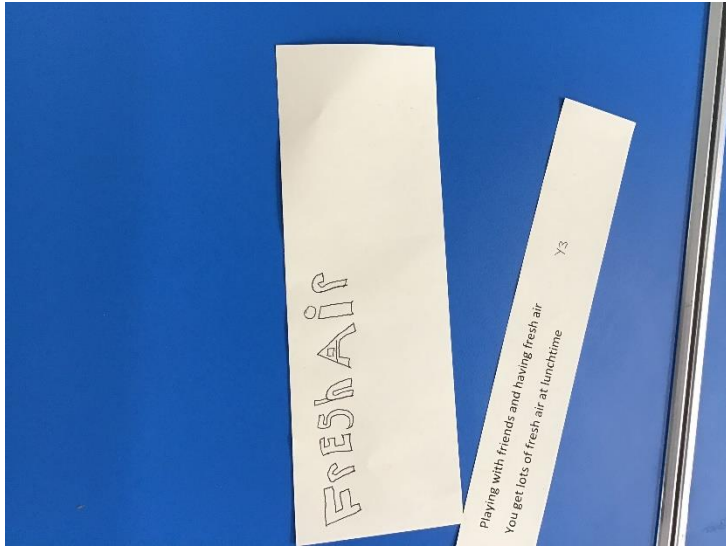
1. After the focus group has taken place the co-researchers will instruct the focus group participants to spend 2 minutes thinking about what was spoken about in the focus group.
2. The co-researchers will then ask the focus group participants in pairs to talk about what they key things that we have spoken about and write them onto pieces of card. The researcher and co-researcher will support the youngest children in writing their comments on the card.
3. The researcher will take a picture of each pair's pieces of card
4. The co-researchers will then ask the focus group participants to "group together things that are similar/go together"
5. The researcher will then take pictures of the children's pieces of card
6. The pieces of card will then be blue tacked to the wall
7. The co-researchers will ask from between the pair's pieces of cards that are on the wall which ones are similar/go together and move them based on what they say into groups. The co-researchers might make suggestions of which ones they think might go together and check out with the focus group participants.

The researcher will be present throughout this process and will facilitate as necessary, e.g. if the co-researchers can't remember what to do next then the researcher will give them a prompt or remind them.

The process will not exceed 30 minutes.







## Appendix P: Call for papers



# Educational and Child Psychology

Call for Papers: 37(3): Right to play: challenges and opportunities  
Guest editors: Charmian Hobbs, Chiara Malagoli & Fraser Lauchlan

Abstract deadline: 1 October 2019

Email: [charmian.hobbs@zen.co.uk](mailto:charmian.hobbs@zen.co.uk); [chiaramalagoli86@gmail.com](mailto:chiaramalagoli86@gmail.com);  
[fraser.lauchlan@strath.ac.uk](mailto:fraser.lauchlan@strath.ac.uk)

Article 31 (Leisure, play and culture) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) states that 'children have the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities... and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts'. Children regard playing as one of the most important aspects of their lives and value time, freedom and quality places to play (International Play Association, 2010). The importance of play to all children's physical, emotional, social and intellectual wellbeing, and health has been well researched and documented (Lester & Russell, 2008; 2010). However, the opportunities for play in the lives of children and young people are decreasing in all contexts: community, school and family.

This issue of *Educational and Child Psychology* is calling for papers that consider the presence or absence of play in the lives of children and young people. We would welcome papers that focus on research and practice such as: play within the school curriculum; extra-curricular activities; access to play; gendered play; play for marginalised groups including: children with special educational needs, children with disabilities or children whose play is restricted because of social, emotional or behavioural difficulties; play within the family; play within middle childhood and adolescence; cross-cultural differences in pedagogy and play; technology and play.

The editors are looking for contributors from those who can add to the understanding of play within the lives of children and young people including the contribution that applied psychologists, particularly educational psychologists can make.

The special issue will be published in September 2020 and at this stage we are asking for abstracts of proposed papers. Abstracts should be received by 1 October 2019, around 250 words in length, and should be submitted to one of the editors for this issue: Charmian Hobbs ([charmian.hobbs@zen.co.uk](mailto:charmian.hobbs@zen.co.uk)), Chiara Malagoli ([chiaramalagoli86@gmail.com](mailto:chiaramalagoli86@gmail.com)) and Fraser Lauchlan ([fraser.lauchlan@strath.ac.uk](mailto:fraser.lauchlan@strath.ac.uk)). Authors submitting successful abstracts will be invited to submit full papers (for editorial consideration) by 1 February 2020.

CALL FOR PAPERS

[bps.org.uk](http://bps.org.uk)

**Appendix Q: Co-authoring the DECP position statement (Hobbs et al., 2019)**



DECP POSITION PAPER

## Children's right to play

Dr Charmian Hobbs (DECP)

Dr Cathy Atkinson (University of Manchester)

Mike Barclay (Ludicology)

Sian Bristow (University of Manchester)

Theresa Casey (International Play Association, Scotland)

Rebecca Finney (University of Manchester)

Dr Natasha Goodhall (Salford Educational Psychology Service)

Marianne Mannello (Play Wales)

Dr Francesca Woods (Lancashire Educational Psychology Service)



# Introduction

## DECP position paper on Children's Right to Play<sup>1</sup>.

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) states the right of all children to have rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities and to participate in cultural life and the arts. However, concerns that the obligations to uphold article 31 rights were not being addressed by governments (David, 2006) prompted advocacy by the International Play Association (IPA, 2010). Ultimately this led to the publication of General comment No. 17 (the child's right to play, leisure and recreation

[UNCRC, 2013]) which elaborates on the right of every child to play, as well as identifying at risk groups, including girls, children living in poverty, children with disabilities, and children from indigenous or minority communities (pp.15–16). The General comment defines play as behaviour initiated, controlled and structured by children, as non-compulsory, driven by intrinsic motivation, not a means to an end and that it has key characteristics of fun, uncertainty, challenge, flexibility and non-productivity (UNCRC, 2013, pp.5–6).

## The importance of play

Children regard playing as one of the most important aspects of their lives and value time, freedom and places to play (IPA, 2010). The importance of play to children's physical, emotional, social and intellectual wellbeing, and health has been well researched and documented (Lester & Russell, 2008, 2010).

Some of these benefits occur immediately as children play, while others develop over time. The intertwined benefits of play relate to its intrinsic value (entertainment, enjoyment and freedom) as well as its instrumental value (learning and development) (Moyles, 2006). Key characteristics of play, including uncertainty, challenge and flexibility, influence 'children's ability to adapt to, survive, thrive and shape their social and physical environments' (Lester & Russell, 2008, p.126). Through play, children experience a range of emotions including frustration, determination, achievement, disappointment and confidence,

and through practice they can learn to manage these feelings (Sutton-Smith, 2003). The importance of children being able to play without intrusive adult controls or structure has been recognised as an important factor in promoting lifelong attributes, such as resilience and flexibility and the development and maintenance of children's social relationships (Mannello, Casey & Atkinson, 2019).

The Children's Play Policy Forum (2019) noted that, in the context of alarming trends in relation to inadequate levels of physical exercise, obesity, and the rates of mental health problems in children and young people, that play can help improve physical and emotional wellbeing; as well as create a sense of identity and strengthening relationships within families and communities.

## Barriers to play

Despite the evidenced benefits for children, including older children, there are temporal, spatial and psychological factors which limit children's access to play (Barclay & Tawil, 2013; Finney & Atkinson, 2019). In recent times opportunities for play, as defined by the UNCRC's (2013) General comment, have been affected by factors such as increased traffic, technology and social media, closure of play facilities, educational pressures and parental anxieties about safety (Children's Play Policy Forum, 2019).

Within the family, fears for children's safety and a tendency to overprotect and avoid risk can diminish access to play (Lester & Russell, 2010). Parents are encouraged to focus on academic learning (Belfield & Garcia, 2014) and pressures from parents' work patterns can result in children spending out of school time in adult-directed facilities such as clubs, child-care centres or after school provision. Pressure from the national curriculum and national strategies (DfE, 2014; Early Education, 2012) means that often schools are primarily concerned with targets and outcomes (Maynard & Chicken, 2010). Where play-based activities form part of the curriculum, these are often adult-led and outcome-focused, and perceived by children as 'work' rather than play (Goodhall & Atkinson, 2017). A recent survey of schools across England found a reduction in the length

of school break times since 1995. The authors report that break times have reduced by 45 minutes per week for children in Key Stage 1 (aged 5 to 7) and 65 minutes per week for young people in secondary school (aged 11 to 16) (Baines & Blatchford, 2019). This study also found that 60 per cent of primary and secondary schools that responded to the survey reported that children might miss a full break or lunch time due to misbehaviour or to catch up on work.

Through our personal and professional interactions with children, we know that they are often more capable of playing than adults give them credit for and find time and space for play wherever and whenever conditions allow. However, children will struggle to play when their basic needs are not met or where the environments they live in are so constraining that they are unable to play. Schools can provide children with the access to time, space and permission for playing, which is an essential part of their everyday lives. This is particularly important for children who have their play restricted by factors such as poverty, domestic or environmental circumstances, recognising that with access to play opportunities children can enjoy their childhoods despite also experiencing financial and social disadvantage (Long, 2017).



## The DECP Position

The DECP fully endorses children's right to play (UNCRC, 1989). We are concerned by the diminishing opportunities for play within the lives of children. We challenge the approach that prioritises outcomes of play, which adults see as important for children, over the process and enjoyment of playing. We advocate for a rights-based approach to children's play (Davey & Lundy, 2011). In doing so the DECP supports the sentiments of the European Early Childhood Education Research Association which states:

Play is a meaningful activity for children and one of their basic rights. Yet the outcomes are diverse. They are noticeable, but not always measurable. Learning occurs during play in multiple ways and children could gain a lot from supportive adults allowing them the space, time and interaction to develop their play activities. Play is also valuable on its own right as a meaningful socio-cultural activity and not just because of its relation to learning.

(2013, p.4)

From this perspective, the DECP position is:

- Child-led play is a critical enabler of children's holistic development and wellbeing.
- Educational psychologists have a key role in championing opportunities for child-led play for all children both in and outside school, for example through:
  - Challenging practice that restricts or reduces access to play.
  - Advocating for access to play within casework.
  - Supporting whole-school initiatives to promote play.
- Withdrawing break time opportunities for play in school should never be used as a punishment (e.g. for misbehaviour or completing unfinished work), nor the threat of withdrawal be used to control children's behaviour.
- All children and young people should have access to free, high quality, local opportunities for play.
  - This is particularly important for children who may currently experience exclusion from play e.g. disabled children, children living in poverty or children from minority communities.

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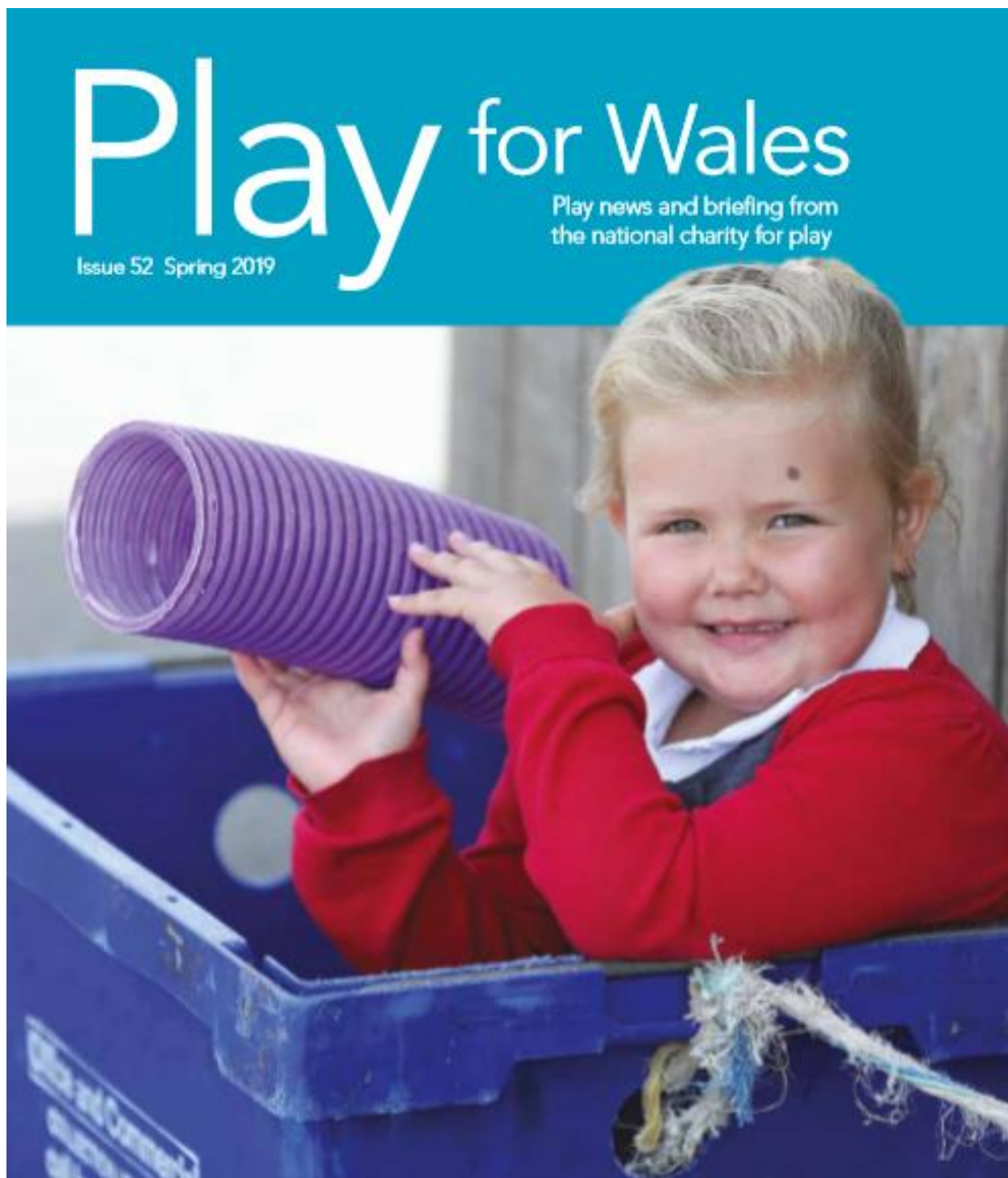
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**Appendix R: Article in the ‘Play for Wales’ magazine outlining paper two**



**Play in schools**



# Research: children's right to play in schools

Researchers at the University of Manchester – Cathy Atkinson, Siân Bristow, Rebecca Finney, Natasha Goodhall and Francesca Woods – share an overview of their various research studies into children's right to play in schools.



There is growing interest amongst educational psychologists (EPs) in promoting children's right to play in schools. Indeed, in the near future, the British Psychological Society's Division of Educational and Child Psychology is planning to release a position statement, soliciting its members to promote children's right to play within their work with schools and teachers.

The impetus for this statement has come from research undertaken by trainee EPs completing a three-year doctoral programme at the University of Manchester, including an article by Atkinson, Bond, Goodhall and Woods (2017). This article will showcase some of this research, considering implications for practice.

## Play opportunities within a Rights Respecting School

Schools granted the gold UNICEF Rights Respecting School award have evidenced embedding all of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the

Child (UNCRC) rights within their policy and practice. Research undertaken by Francesca Woods aimed to find out how one such UNICEF accredited primary school facilitated play for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Francesca carried out a case study at the school, interviewing children with SEND and their teachers, and observing children during playtimes. Play was facilitated for children with SEND at both the whole-school and individual level. At the whole-school level, teachers' knowledge of play, and their belief in its importance helped ensure play opportunities were provided. Teachers were also receptive to children's views and provided opportunities for different types of play at breaktimes, based on the children's preferences.

At an individual level, teachers considered barriers to play activities and aimed to overcome these, for example by building a path for a wheelchair onto the playing field. Teachers' responsiveness to children's

preferences meant that play opportunities within the school were constantly changing in line with children's interests, with teachers problem-solving to overcome barriers to engagement.

## Children's perceptions of work and play

A 'systematic review', conducted by Natasha Goodhall (Goodhall and Atkinson, 2017) brought together findings from twelve different studies which revealed that even very young children differentiate 'play' from 'work' within school curricula. Factors influencing whether children perceived an activity as play or work included:

- Choice: whether the activity was adult-directed or voluntary
- Environment: whether the setting for the activity was formal (for example at tables) or informal (for example on the floor or outside)
- Teacher presence: whether an adult was directing, watching or absent
- Enjoyment: whether or not they had fun
- Type of activity: whether it involved toys, was critiqued by teachers, was effortful, goal or process-orientated.

Generally, children identified clear boundaries between play and work. However, some settings adopted a child-centred approach, where playfulness and spontaneity were encouraged, and control of activities was shared. Here the lines between play and work were more blurred. Children could take responsibility for their learning in developmentally-appropriate ways, and adults engaged in playfulness, promoting children's ownership and enjoyment. The review concluded that capturing children's views can potentially help to create optimal learning environments for all children, which facilitate access to their right to play, and benefit playing, learning and development in a seamless fashion.

## How children's play experiences change on transition to high school

To explore older children's play opportunities, Rebecca Finney explored the views of Year 6 (primary) and Year 7 (secondary) pupils living in the same community about their access to play opportunities. Six workshops were conducted with each year group with children highlighting factors related to time, space and psychological factors (such as being safe and enjoying the experience) affecting their play opportunities.

Overall Year 6 pupils reported more opportunities for play than Year 7 pupils, across home, school and the community contexts, despite both groups reporting

restrictions due to homework demands, the weather, safety concerns and school rules. Although Year 7 pupils reported an increase in their independence since starting secondary school, they also felt they now had less permission to play. Year 7 pupils feared that they would be targeted or rejected by other children for playing, in school and in the community.

Both year groups referenced negative attitudes towards older children, lack of appropriate equipment and traffic as barriers to play access.

## Children researching the impact of school playtime on well-being

Research has shown that poor experiences of playtime at school, such as feeling lonely or being bullied, can have a negative effect upon children's short and long-term mental health and well-being. Siân Bristow trained four 9 to 10 year old children to act as researchers to find out about the social, emotional and well-being aspects of playtime in their school. She supported the children in successfully observing their playtimes and conducting focus groups with children aged 5 to 10.

Children in the focus groups suggested that friends, games, having something to do and how they are treated by the other children were the most important things that affected their well-being at playtime. The children also emphasised the links between these factors: for example, they said that it wasn't enough just to have games to play if their friends didn't want to play them with them. Strengths and areas for development of playtime were identified within this school and bespoke interventions implemented to promote children's right to play at the school.

### Implications and next steps

The research above has wide-ranging implications for EPs, teachers and school-based professionals. An important part of the research is dissemination, and studies have been presented at national conferences for playworkers and EPs. However, there is also ongoing work with schools and local authorities to ensure that schools are instrumental in promoting children's right to play.

For more information, please contact Cathy Atkinson: [cathy.atkinson@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:cathy.atkinson@manchester.ac.uk)

### References

- Atkinson, C., Bond, C., Goodhall, N. and Woods, F. (2017) Children's access to their Right to Play: findings from two exploratory studies. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 3(2), 20-36.
- Goodhall, N. and Atkinson, C. (2017) How do children distinguish between 'play' and 'work'? Conclusions from the literature. *Early Child Development and Care*.

# Appendix S: Workshop outlining paper two delivered at the DECP conference January 2020



Promoting children's right to play: Child-led research investigating the social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing aspects of playtime

Sian Bristow  
Trainee Educational Psychologist  
The University of Manchester



### Children's right to play

Article 31 of the UNCRC (1989) states the right of all children to have rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities and to participate in cultural life and the arts.


### The importance of play

- One of the most important aspect of children's lives (IPA, 2010)
- The importance of play to children's physical, emotional, social and intellectual wellbeing, and health has been well researched
- Benefits are both short-term and long-term
- Importance of free play




### Barriers to play

- Adult perceptions of play
- Safety concerns
- Reduction in time/opportunity for free play
- Exclusion from play



### Discussion

Discuss your reflections on the DECP position on children's right to play



### My research

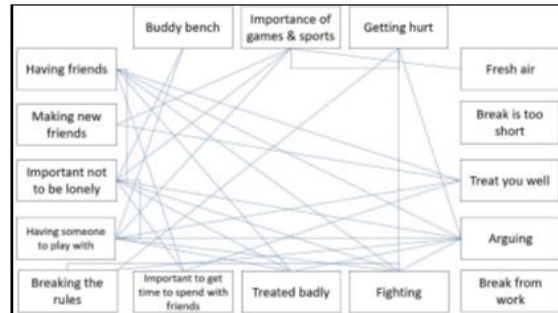
Research question:  
How can child-led research help elicit children's perspectives on how their playtime experience impacts of their social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing.



"Just teach us the skills please, we'll do the rest" (Kellet et al, 2004)

## Research design

- Children have a right to be heard (Article 12)
- Children designed, implemented the research design and analysed the research data
- RADIO model (Timmins et al, 2003)
- Co-researcher 'training'
- The co-researchers facilitated four focus groups and observed on the playground for four periods of 10 minutes
- The children led the thematic analysis and choose quotes



## Implications

- The child-led research produced rich and unique data
- Children were well placed to understand the playtime context
- The importance of playtimes to children's SEMH/wellbeing needs to be better recognised
- Holistic provision/approaches are needed
- EPs are well placed to promote children's right to play at playtimes and in facilitating child-led research



## Discussion and questions



## References

- Bristow, S. and Atkinson, C. (in preparation). Child-led research investigating the social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing aspects of playtime.
- Hobbs, C., Atkinson, C., Barclay, M., Bristow, S., Theresa, C., Finney, R., Goodhall, N., Mannello, M. & Woods, F. (2019). *DECP position paper children's right to play*. Leicester: British Psychological Society.
- IPA. (2010). *Promoting the Child's Right to Play: IPA Global Consultations on Children's Right to Play Report*. (IPA, Ed.). Faringdon.
- Kellett, M., Forrest, R., Dent, N. & Ward, S. (2004). "Just teach us the skills please, we'll do the rest": Empowering ten-year-olds as active researchers. *Children and Society*, 18 (5), 329-343.
- Timmins, P., Shepherd, D. & Kelly, T. (2003). The Research and Development in Organisations Approach and the Evaluation of a Mainstream Behaviour Support Initiative. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 19 (3), 229-242.
- UNCR. (1989). *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*. Geneva: United Nations.



## **Appendix T: Ethical Review Management System form**

### **Involving children as co-researchers to improve playtime provision and well-being in school**

*A Data Management Plan created using DMPonline*

Creators: Sian Bristow, Cathy Atkinson

Affiliation: University of Manchester

Template: University of Manchester

Project abstract:

Involving children as co-researcher to improve playtime provision and well-being in one school

Last modified: 14-08-2018

# Involving children as co-researchers to improve playtime provision and well-being in school

---

## Manchester Data Management Outline

1. Is this project already funded?

- Yes

2. If you will be applying for funding from multiple sources who else will you be applying to?

I will not be applying for additional funding

3. Is The University of Manchester the lead institution for this project?

- Yes

4. What data will you use in this project (please select all that apply)?

- Acquire new data

5. Where will the data be stored and backed-up during the project lifetime?

- University of Manchester Research Data Storage

6. If you will be using Research Data Storage, how much storage will you require?

- < 1 TB

7. Will any of the data associated with this project be sourced from, processed or stored outside of the institutions and groups stated on your data sharing agreement?

- No

8. How long do you intend to keep your data for after the end of your project (in years)?

- < 5 years

### **Questions about personal information**

Personal information is what we call personal data and relates to living individuals. Special category data is

sensitive information such as medical records, ethnic background, and sexual orientation for example. If you are not using personal data then you can skip the rest of this section.

Please note that in line with GDPR and data protection regulations, personal information should only be stored in an identifiable form for as long as is necessary for the project. You must obtain the appropriate [ethical approval](#) in order to use identifiable personal data.

9. What type of person identifying information will you be processing?

- Audio and/or video recordings
- Anonymised personal data

10. Please provide details of how you plan to store, protect and ensure confidentiality of the participants' information as stated in the question above.

The data will be stored securely on the University of Manchester drive. If audio recording takes place (this is a participatory action research design) then the data will be sent to an approved University of Manchester transcriber and parents/carers and the children will have given their consent and assent for this to take place.

11. If you are storing personal information will you need to keep it beyond the end of the project?

- No

12. Sharing personal information can present risks to participants' privacy, researchers and the institution. Will any personal information or sensitive data be shared with an individual or organisation outside of the University of Manchester?

- No

13. If you will be sharing personal information outside of the University of Manchester will the individual or organisation you are sharing with be outside the EEA?

- No

14. Are you planning to use the personal information for future purposes such as research?

- No

15. Who will act as the data custodian or information asset owner for this study?

Dr Cathy Atkinson

16. Please provide the date on which this plan was last reviewed (dd/mm/yyyy).

Question not answered.

## **Project details**

What is the purpose of your research project?

Participatory action research design. Potential research questions:

RQ1: How would children as researchers, explore the play experiences of other children, with reference to wellbeing?

RQ2: How could data gathered by these children be used to promote wellbeing through play within a single setting?

What policies and guidelines on data management, data sharing, and data security are relevant to your research project?

DECP policies

## **Responsibilities and Resources**

Who will be responsible for data management?

Sian Bristow (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

What resources will you require to deliver your plan?

Time from the school to attend meetings

## **Data Collection**

What data will you collect or create?

## **Data Collection**

What data will you collect or create?

This research has a participatory action research design. Therefore methods of data collection will be decided upon in the early meetings. It is likely that we will collect children's views (e.g. interview/focus groups/questionnaires) and observe children playing in the playground.

How will the data be collected or created?

The data will be collected by the child co-researchers who will be supported by the researcher in this process. Methods of data collection will be decided upon in the early meetings. It is likely that we will collect children's views (e.g. interview/focus groups/questionnaires) and observe children playing in the playground.

## **Documentation and Metadata**

What documentation and metadata will accompany the data?

To be discussed and agreed upon with my supervisor

## **Ethics and Legal Compliance**

How will you manage any ethical issues?

- Ethical issue: The children are not able to act effectively as co-researchers

I will address this by ensuring that the children are guided and supported effectively in acting as co-researchers and that the staff select children who are able to engage with the research process (i.e. they are able to understand basic research methods, they are able to work effectively as a group, they are able to communicate effectively with other children). I will address this by providing adequate training to the co-researchers and being present and intervening if necessary throughout the data collection.

- Ethical issue: The children may miss lessons

This will be negotiated with the school, parents/carers and the children. I will aim to minimise any interference to the children's learning and provide opportunities for children to catch up on any work missed.

- Ethical issue: The children are not enjoying being co-researchers

I will try to make the experience of acting as a co-researcher an enjoyable and confidence building experience. I will try to prevent this ethical issue from happening by presenting a realistic picture of what becoming a co-researcher will involve to the children before asking for volunteers. I shall also ask the staff which children they think are more likely to engage and enjoy the experience. I intend to have 6 child co-researchers so that if a child does not want to continue being a co-researcher there are still enough children to continue carrying out the research.

- Ethical issue: The children are observing or asking about something problematic

I will try to prepare the children with what they should do if they encounter a problematic experience as part of the research. I also intend to be present and research with the children.

Ethical issue: The children being observed may find it an unusual experience

I intend to make any observations of the playground as discrete as possible. The children being observed will have the opportunity to opt out of being observed.

- Ethical issue: Ensuring that the children do not observe children playing whose parents have opted out of the research process.

The children will be told who they must not observe.

How will you manage copyright and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) issues?

This will be agreed in the initial meeting with the stakeholders

## **Storage and backup**

How will the data be stored and backed up?

The data will be stored on the University of Manchester p drive

How will you manage access and security?

The data will be securely stored and password protected on my p drive at the university.

## **Selection and Preservation**

Which data should be retained, shared, and/or preserved?

Data will be stored for 10 years.

What is the long-term preservation plan for the dataset?

I do not intend to re-use the data

## **Data Sharing**

How will you share the data?

The data will be made available publicly in anonymous form.

Are any restrictions on data sharing required?

Anonymisation

Created using the DMPonline. Last modified 14-08-2018

6 of 6

ethics additional doc.docx

Once instruments ( obs proforma, surveys, schedules) have been agreed with participants further ethical approval will be sought before using these in the research

## **Appendix U: Paper two parent/Carer information sheet (child co-researchers)**

### Involving children as co-researchers to improve playtime provision and well-being in XXXX School

#### **Parent/Carer Participant Information Sheet**

Your child is being invited to take part in a research study (as part of a research project undertaken as part of a Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology) – the overall aim of this research is to investigate children’s views of playtimes at their school, to inform playtime provision. Your child is being invited to act as a co-researcher (supported by Siân Bristow, Trainee Educational Psychologist) in this research.

Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

#### **Who will conduct the research?**

Sian Bristow, 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Trainee Educational Psychologist, Ellen Wilkson Building, The University of Manchester.

#### **What is the purpose of the research?**

This research hopes to contribute to protecting and promoting children’s play. This purpose of this research is to investigate [*final research questions will be decided upon as part of the participatory action research process and inserted here, these are potential research questions*]:

Research Question 1: How would children as researchers, explore the play experiences of other children, with reference to wellbeing?

Research Question 2: How could data gathered by these children be used to promote wellbeing through play within a single setting?

We think that it is important to gain children’s views on playtimes. This will allow us to inform school practice and help us to identify improvements that could be made in the future. As part of this, Siân Bristow is working under the supervision of Dr Cathy Atkinson (Educational Psychologist) to train a group of students to act as co-researchers to decide upon a research methodology (e.g. interview/ focus groups/ observation etc.), do their chosen research method and analyse and share the data.

### **Why has my child been chosen?**

Your child has been selected from students at XXXX Primary School as somebody who has expressed interest in becoming a co-researcher in this research.

### **What would my child be asked to do if they took part?**

If you agree for your child to be involved in the research, the child co-researchers and Siân Bristow with a small number of staff within the school will decide upon research questions and a method of data collection (e.g. interviews etc.). Siân Bristow will then support the child co-researchers in doing their data collection (e.g. interviewing other children within their school) and analysing it. Siân Bristow and the child co-researchers will then share this information with the small number of staff involved with this research.

### **What happens to the data collected?**

The data will be stored securely on The University of Manchester computer system. Children's comments/actions will be reported without using their name.

### **How is confidentiality maintained?**

Any information that your child tells us will be kept safe. *[if interviews/focus groups are chosen...]* All data that is recorded will only be listened to by the Playtime Stakeholder Team (select staff, Siân Bristow and the child co-researchers) and a transcriber. This will then be deleted when the paper has been written. We will share the anonymised (without using any names) data with teachers in the school and the Local Authority. Siân Bristow intends to take notes at the meetings for the purpose of documenting the process, the notes will be anonymised (you will not be able to tell who said what).

The data collected may be published in anonymous form in academic books, journals and as part of a thesis due for submission in 2020. Any information gathered will be held in anonymous form on The University of Manchester's database. However, if your child says something that worries us about their safety or somebody else's safety we will have to pass this information on. If this is the case, then we pass this information on to you and the School's Safeguarding Officer.

### **What happens if I do not want my child to take part or if I change my mind?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not you would like your child to take part. If you do decide to allow your child to take part, then you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide that your child can take part, you are still free to withdraw up to a specified point (up until time of publication) without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself.

### **Will I or my child be paid for participating in the research?**

No, you or your child will not be paid for participating in this research.

### **What is the duration of the research?**

This research study will take place throughout the academic year of 2018-2019.

### **Where will the research be conducted?**



The research will take place at school during school hours. The child co-researchers will receive training on using research skills.

### **Will the outcomes of the research be published?**

It is hoped that the content of this research will be published as part of a doctoral thesis.

### **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check**

The researcher (Siân Bristow) has an enhanced certificate from the Disclosure and Barring Service.

### **Who has reviewed the research project?**

This project has been reviewed by the University of Manchester Research Ethics Committee.

### **What if something goes wrong?**

In the unlikely event that your child becomes upset within one of the sessions, a member of staff will take them out of the session and take appropriate action. The researcher will work in the best interests of the child.

### **What if I want to make a complaint?**

#### **Minor complaints**

If you have a minor complaint, then you need to contact the researcher in the first instance:

**SIAN BRISTOW**

[Sian.bristow-2@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Sian.bristow-2@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk)

However, if you would prefer not to discuss with members of the research team, please contact Cathy Atkinson, Curriculum Director and Supervisor of the Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology at: [cathy.atkinson@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:cathy.atkinson@manchester.ac.uk)

#### **Formal Complaints**

**If you wish to make a formal complaint or if you are not satisfied with the response you have gained from the researchers in the first instance then please contact** the Research Governance and Integrity Manager, Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, by emailing: [research.complaints@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:research.complaints@manchester.ac.uk) or by telephoning 0161 275 2674 or 275 2046.

### **What Do I Do Now?**

If you have any queries about the study or if you are interested in taking part then please contact the researcher(s):

SIAN BRISTOW

[Sian.bristow-2@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Sian.bristow-2@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk)

By telephone at the University of Manchester: 0161 275 3511

**This Project Has Been Approved by the University of Manchester's Research Ethics Committee [UREC reference number 2018-4555-7123].**

## Appendix V: Paper two parent/Carer information sheet (child participants)



### Involving children as co-researchers to improve playtime provision and well-being in XXX Primary School

#### Parent/Carer Participant Information Sheet

Your child is being invited to take part in a research study (as part of a research project undertaken as part of a Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology) – the overall aim of this research is to investigate children’s views of playtimes at their school, use their views to make changes and then find out if the changes have improved their well-being at school.

Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

#### Who will conduct the research?

Sian Bristow, 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Trainee Educational Psychologist, Ellen Wilkson Building, The University of Manchester.

#### What is the purpose of the research?

This research hopes to contribute to protecting and promoting children’s play. This purpose of this research is to investigate:

Research Question 1: How would children as researchers, explore the play experiences of other children, with reference to wellbeing?

Research Question 2: How could data gathered by these children be used to promote wellbeing through play within a single setting?

We think that it is important to gain children’s views on playtimes. This will allow us to inform school practice and help us to identify improvements that could be made in the future. As part of this, Sian Bristow is working under the supervision of Dr Cathy Atkinson (Educational Psychologist) to train a group of Year 5 students to act as co-researchers to interview children (supported by Sian) and observe them in the playground.

#### Why has my child been chosen?

All pupils who are in Primary School are being invited to take part in this research. The children’s perspectives will be valuable in exploring what’s important to them at playtime at school.

#### What would my child be asked to do if they took part?

If you agree for your child to be involved in the research, the Year 5 child researchers and Sian Bristow will ask your child questions about playtime in school as part of a focus group with other children. This will take place in school, in two separate sessions; for one hour in November and one hour in June/July. The Year 5 researchers and Sian will also observe all children in the playground.

### **What happens to the data collected?**

The focus groups will be recorded using an audio-recorder. The data will be stored securely on The University of Manchester computer system. Themes will be discussed in the write up of an academic paper. Children's comments will be reported without using their name.

### **How is confidentiality maintained?**

Any information that your child tells us will be kept safe. All data that is recorded will only be listened to by the researcher and the Year 5 co-researchers. This will then be deleted when the paper has been written. We will share the anonymised (without using any names) answers from the group with teachers in the school and the Local Authority. The data collected may be published in anonymous form in academic books, journals or as part of a thesis due for submission in 2020. The Year 5 researchers will be the only other people (than Sian) who will know what your child has said (because their name will be removed when we pass the information on). This means that they will not share their views with anybody outside of the group. Any information gathered will be held in anonymous form on The University of Manchester's database. However, if your child says something that worries us about their safety or somebody else's safety we will have to pass this information on. If this is the case, then we pass this information on to you and the School's Safeguarding Officer.

### **What happens if I do not want my child to take part or if I change my mind?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not you would like your child to take part. If you do decide to allow your child to take part, then you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide that your child can take part, you are still free to withdraw up to a specified point (up until time of publication) without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself.

### **Will I or my child be paid for participating in the research?**

No, you or your child will not be paid for participating in this research.

### **What is the duration of the research?**

This research study will take place throughout the academic year of 2018-2019.

### **Where will the research be conducted?**

The research will take place at school during school hours.

### **Will the outcomes of the research be published?**

It is hoped that the content of this research will be published as part of a doctoral thesis.

### **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check**

The researcher (Sian Bristow) has an enhanced certificate from the Disclosure and Barring Service.

### **Who has reviewed the research project?**

This project has been reviewed by the University of Manchester Research Ethics Committee.

## **What if something goes wrong?**

In the unlikely event that your child becomes upset within one of the sessions, a member of staff will take them out of the session and take appropriate action. The researcher will work in the best interests of the child.

## **What if I want to make a complaint?**

### **Minor complaints**

If you have a minor complaint, then you need to contact the researcher in the first instance:

SIAN BRISTOW

[Sian.bristow-2@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Sian.bristow-2@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk)

However, if you would prefer not to discuss with members of the research team, please contact Cathy Atkinson, Curriculum Director and Supervisor of the Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology at: [cathy.atkinson@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:cathy.atkinson@manchester.ac.uk)

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## **What Do I Do Now?**

If you have any queries about the study or if you are interested in taking part then please contact the researcher(s):

SIAN BRISTOW

[Sian.bristow-2@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Sian.bristow-2@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk)


By telephone at the University of Manchester: 0161 275 3511

**This Project Has Been Approved by the University of Manchester's Research Ethics Committee [UREC reference number 2018-4555-7123].**

# PLAYTIME AT SCHOOL

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about playtime at school. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve.

Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish for your child to take part. Thank you for taking the time to read this.




Who is doing this research?

Hi, my name is Siân Bristow.


I am a student at Manchester University and I am doing a research project as part of my University work.

I am going to be working with some of the teachers and children in your school. There will be a group of us, you can think of us as 'The Playtime Team', we will be doing this research together.




Why are you doing this research?

We think that playtime at school is important! Some of the Year 5 children in the school are going to act as researchers and help me do this research. This is because sometimes adults can see things very differently to children and what an adult might want to know about playtime could be very different to what a child might want to know.



Why have I been chosen?

You have been invited to take part as you are in XXX Primary School.



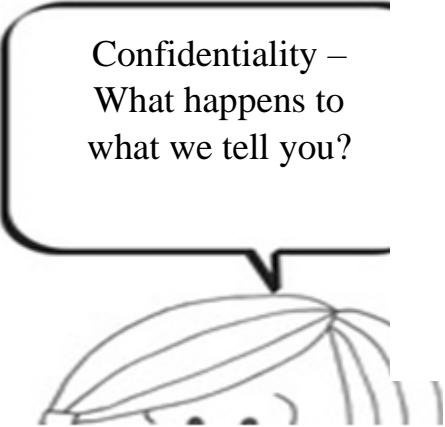
What will taking part involve and when will this happen?

The Year 5 children (who are going to act as co-researchers) and I want to:

- *Ask you to take part in a focus group in which we will ask you questions about playtime at school*
- *Come and visit your playground at playtime to watch and see what you and your classmates like to do at play time.*

Based on what you tell us, The Playtime Team will then try to make some changes to your playtime.

What we find out about playtime at your school might also help other children's playtimes at other schools as we will share our information

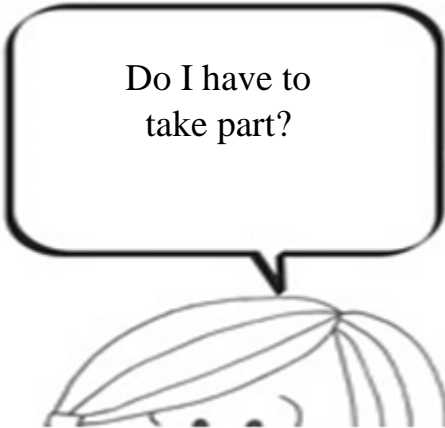


Confidentiality –  
What happens to  
what we tell you?

- ✓ Any information that you tell us will be kept safe.
- ✓ Teachers in The Playtime Team will see what people said in the focus group but they will not know who said what. We will share the answers from the group (without using any names) with teachers in the school and other people interested in this research.
- ✓ *The co-researchers and the other pupils who take part in the focus group will be the only other people who will know what you have said (because your name will be removed when we pass the information on).*

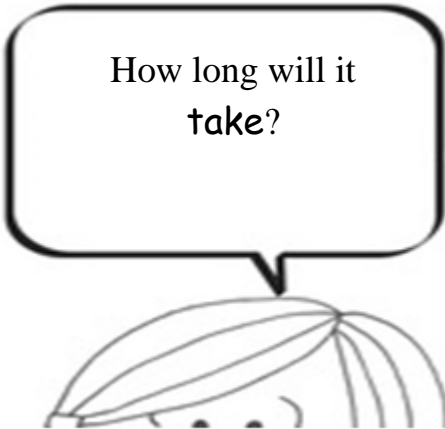


- ✓ *If you agree to take part, you are agreeing to keep what other pupils in the group have said safe. This means that you will not tell anybody outside of the group what they have said.*
- ✓ *The information you give will be kept safe at The University of Manchester office.*
- ✓ *However, if you say something that worries us about your safety or somebody else's safety we will have to pass this information on. If this is the case, then we will talk to you about it before we talk to your parents/carers and teacher.*




Do I have to take part?

*You have completely free choice about whether to enter this research. If you do not want to take part, you do not have to give a reason. If you decide to take part in the research, you can also choose to stop being part of it at any time.*




How long will it take?

*The focus group will last for one hour. We will come to your playground three times.*




Where will the  
research be  
done?

*At your school, in school time.*



Who has checked  
your research  
plan?

This project has been reviewed by the  
University of Manchester Research Ethics  
Committee (2018-4555-7123).



What if I want to  
complain?

Speak to your Parent or Carer, they have  
been given information about how you can  
contact the University

Thank you for reading 😊

