



PLAY AT SCHOOL



FINAL REPORT ON

PLAYLINK's Play at School Scheme

1. BACKGROUND	2
2. CONNECTING VALUES TO PRACTICE	6
3. SIGNIFICANT FEATURES OF THE SCHEME	12
4. SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FINDINGS	18

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are immensely grateful to the three schools that participated in the Play at School Scheme. Each school was very much a unique community, but common to them all was a spirit of openness, commitment and friendliness. We wish the schools, their pupils, teachers, playground supervisors and support staff well in the future.

The three Hertfordshire schools were:
Holtsmere End Infant and Nursery School
St Andrew's JMI School
Tudor JMI and Nursery School

We held an open recruitment process for the evaluation contract. We were pleased to appoint Glenor Roberts whose findings appear in Section Four.

Cover: Children at breaktime, Tudor School
Design: Richard Reeve

Supported by



CALOUSTE
GULBENKIAN
FOUNDATION

Published by PLAYLINK
Unit 5 Upper, The Co-op Centre
11 Mowl St, London SW9 6BG

ISBN: 0 9535665 0 1
© 1999 PLAYLINK
Registered Charity No.303322

SECTION ONE

Background to the Play at School Scheme

GENESIS

The Play at School Scheme was established in 1993 in response to the growing number of enquiries PLAYLINK was receiving from primary schools which had decided that their playgrounds needed to be improved.

Schools generally considered ‘improvement’ to mean the purchase of fixed play equipment, and what was being sought from PLAYLINK was technical advice: what equipment should a school choose; which supplier did we recommend; and did we provide equipment cheaper, or to a higher standard, than other suppliers.

Schools appeared, in part at least, to be responding to concerns about bullying – an area that was receiving increasing amounts of media and specialist press attention – and a general feeling that breaktime was simply not working very well. Their aim seemed to be to keep children busy, giving them things to do until break ended and the rhythm and discipline of the classroom could be restored.

That the breaktime period might have a positive contribution to make to

children's development, that it offered a potential space for children to learn by different means – to learn what cannot be taught – that it need not simply be a time for 'letting off steam', appeared not to be considered.

Breaktime was just that. A time for teachers to take a well earned break, to meet each other, have a coffee or eat their lunch. A period for children to move about, refuel, be outside (weather permitting) or be trapped inside in inclement weather.

Breaktime was supervised by a 'specialist' staff of supervisors whose formal status within the school community and low level of remuneration reflected the value education authorities have traditionally accorded the break period.

SUSPENDED PURPOSE

Conceptually, schools conceive of breaktime as the period when their primary purpose – formal education – is temporarily suspended. A policy and conceptual vacuum is thereby created. It is the absence of a positive, formal, policy based conception of breaktime that is the root cause of so many schools' daily difficulty.

THE PLAY AT SCHOOLS SCHEME

PLAYLINK's approach to schools was based on the understanding that long-term improvement to children's play opportunities cannot be achieved in a setting where play is neither valued nor properly understood. So long as breaktime is conceived as a hiatus in the school's primary – educative – purpose, play will be marginalised and seen through the distorting prism of 'behaviour management' and the need for games-based activities.

The Play At School Scheme was an attempt to change attitudes and values using a management consultancy style of engagement. In this it was an attempt to enhance the capacity of schools to address the 'whole child', the one that actually attends school. PLAYLINK's Play at School Scheme aimed to assist schools turn 'breaktime' into 'playtime'.

WHY SHOULD SCHOOLS CARE ABOUT PLAY?

Children are not magically divorced from or inoculated against the pressures and pleasures they encounter and cause in their out-of-school hours. Schools are part of, are affected by and have an effect on, the wider world children inhabit. If children are denied play opportunities, this will have an impact on school life as a whole.

Increasingly, the non-school environment is perceived as unsafe for children's play. Schools are one of the few places left where parents still feel it safe to send their children. This offers schools the opportunity to be part of the process of reawakening both parents and children to the possibilities and benefits of play.

THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION: PERCEPTION OF SCHOOLS ALONG THE WAY

There is a body of evidence to suggest that the Play at School Scheme had a significant and enduring positive effect within each of the three schools, for the benefit of children and their play. In addition, some of the schools felt that the scheme had a wider impact on the school community as a whole; that the capacity of the school to speak to itself was enhanced. This of course says as much about the schools' ethos of openness and willingness to explore ideas as it does about the scheme.

Schools have also attested to the beneficial effects a pleasurable playtime can have on children's work in the classroom. As one school put it:

Often they [the children] will use their formal education experiences to inform their play and bring back into the classroom insight which we do not have time to develop within the confines of the curriculum.

SECTION TWO

Connecting values to practice

RECRUITING THE SCHOOLS

The Play at School Scheme, which was funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (as was the subsequent independent evaluation), aimed to work with three schools within one education authority. The process of recruitment, was based on instituting a Play At School Grants Scheme in Hertfordshire.

The Scheme invited Hertfordshire's pre-secondary schools to apply to PLAYLINK for a period of consultancy, plus a £500 capital grant to be spent on enhancing play opportunities at breaktime. Some 30 schools applied from which three were chosen. Schools were judged on the basis of their willingness to participate fully in the process of disseminating the learning gained on the Scheme. Schools were not judged, indeed were not asked, about their views about play, or their experiences of breaktime.

However, the grant guidance notes did set out PLAYLINK's analysis and approach:

Breaktime is conceived as a hiatus in the school's educative process. The impact on the school community is often profound: children are intimidated and prefer to stay inside or close to an adult; opportunities for private and fantasy play are minimal; boisterous games impinge on quiet play and, at the end of playtime, children are returned to the classroom neither refreshed nor stimulated.

... resolving the problems associated with school playgrounds needs the participation of the whole school community in the process of reassessment, analysis and change. Playtime needs to be valued as a significant part of the school day and play as an activity with status equivalent to that of formal education. This often requires a realignment of the school's priorities. A change of such magnitude can be secured only in the context of a change in the culture of the school as a whole.

Notwithstanding our strenuous efforts to convey the philosophical underpinning of PLAYLINK's approach, one of the Headteachers participating in the Scheme reported to the independent assessor, with commendable honesty, that:

I was more interested in the money ...

But added: *that lasted only as long as the first consultation meeting.*

THE PROCESS

The process embarked upon by each of the three schools participating in the Play At School Grants Scheme was as follows:

- negotiation of a formal contract between each school and PLAYLINK;
- creation of a forum (The Play Working Party) comprising representatives of most or all sections of the school community;
- in a seminar/workshop setting, discussions on first principles, understanding and values;
- formulation of criteria by which action aimed at creating play opportunities might be judged;
- drawing the understandings reached into a play policy that is formally endorsed by school Governors;
- instrumental decisions to be judged ultimately by the criterion of effectiveness – did they work in relation to the agreed criteria.

The Play at School Scheme worked with the adult school community. As the consultation process progressed and play policies were agreed (after consultation within the school), staff drew children into the process of thinking about how breaktime could be improved.

PLAYLINK's only role here was to remind the play working parties to keep in view the quality play environment criteria whilst gleaning children's ideas and aspirations. Schools almost certainly possess the skills and sensitivities necessary for engaging with and drawing out children's ideas within a school setting. PLAYLINK claims no special expertise here.

DURATION OF THE SCHEME

The scheme started in September 1993 and was originally due to end by July 1994. For reasons that will become clear later in this report, PLAYLINK's involvement with schools was not formally complete until May 1995. However, changes within the schools were taking place throughout the period. Below is a snapshot of some of the changes that were made.

DETAILING SOME OF THE CHANGES

Schools reported beneficial changes in terms of breaktime itself and the classroom setting.

As at July 1995, one school had made no changes to the physical environment. (This, in part, was because the Education Authority planned to build a nursery class on a section of the playground. School-generated changes to the playground could not be initiated until the works were completed.) Yet this school reported that:

Without any additional equipment the children have greater freedom born from better communications, consensus of what play ... should be like, shared expectations about behaviour, greater understanding because parents, children and

lunchtime staff have all had a chance to say what its like for them. This has arisen from changes in attitude and practice e.g. its OK to get muddy...

Another school organised a 'Play Week' and developed a permanent, replenishable 'Play Bank' of old clothes, cardboard boxes, and simple equipment. A 'Play Coordinator' post has been created. The play co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring breaktime is properly resourced; this includes collecting used boxes from shops and discarded clothes from parents. In addition, this school is considering adding a 'play' module to their 'Effective Parenting' programme.

This school expects:

that the benefits will eventually be enormous.

This particular school started working with its children relatively early in the Scheme. In part this is because the school felt itself able to address immediately and directly the issue at hand – play.

The school is well established and had few if any 'structural' faults to address. The staff team appeared well integrated, in part because of the multiple roles a number of key individuals fulfilled: playground supervisors were classroom assistants and, in one instance, a school governor as well. Playground supervisors were not held in low regard. The status accorded their other functions reflected back onto their playground responsibilities.

The third school embarked on a number of low-key environmental changes at an early stage of the Scheme. The Scheme informed the thinking of the Head and those she consulted about what changes should occur, though the school Play Working Party had barely begun work and in any case was required initially to focus less on policy issues than unresolved tensions within the school 'community'. (The need for doing something about the playground arose from the removal of a mobile classroom from the school grounds, a decision that predated PLAYLINK's involvement with the school.)

The changes that took place were:

... a low key, low cost development using natural materials (logs, bark, stones and pebbles) to create paths, sitting areas and open up access to a hitherto out-of-bounds copse. The school reported that children were enjoying the extension of play opportunities offered by this development.

This school became, in common with the school quoted earlier, unusually enthusiastic about mud, as this extract from the school's January 1995 newsletter to parents demonstrates:

PLAYTIMES

With wet winter weather, the play areas get muddy, but we are delighted with the way children play at school. We have noticed there is much less rough play and so feel that muddy shoes are a small price to pay. If your child really enjoys playing on the gravel and running on the field, a pair of wellingtons kept at school might be the answer to save expensive footwear.

Taking the three schools together, relatively low levels of new resources were introduced in order to affect change on the ground. The significant change was in the attitudes and understandings of the school. What had developed was a different way of seeing. The facts remained the same – mud is always muddy – but the criteria used to categorise them changed.

CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR AND PERFORMANCE IN THE CLASSROOM

We asked the schools to comment on whether the Scheme had any impact on education achievement or children's behaviour in the classroom.

The schools reported that:

Since there is more harmony and fulfilment on the playground there is less discord brought into the classroom.

The demands of the curriculum are such that free choice and opportunities for

'doing what I would like' are few and far between. The children value the freedom of playtime and find that the range for their choice is wider so that they are more ready to accept the work load demanded during the time of their formal education.

On a basic level the children come in ready to start work again in a much more settled way.

The children are generally more active and seem to benefit ... and this seems to help them settle quicker and work harder.

The children ... utilise some of the social skills developed outside in their group work ...

I no longer have a queue of children waiting to see me at one o'clock!

SECTION THREE

Significant features of the scheme

THE CONTRACT PROCESS

Each of the schools had an individual contract with PLAYLINK. The process of formulating the terms of the contract, the emphasis on a client/consultant contractual relationship, the insistence on formal, signed agreements between the parties, were designed to reinforce and highlight the nature and extent of the commitment required. Governors were thereby formally drawn into the process, underscoring the intention that what was being embarked upon was a whole school process.

The contract acted as the first – and necessary – antidote to schools' enthusiasm for the scheme being based more on the prospect of receiving a £500 'reward' at the end of the process, than any real commitment to, or understanding of, what was required of them.

THE PLAY WORKING PARTY

The Play Working Party was the vehicle for driving the process forward. This was the body that would examine with the PLAYLINK consultant ideas and understandings about play – for example, examining the distinction between 'free' play and play within the context of formal education – and take responsibility for

formulating the school play policy. It would ensure that a draft play policy was circulated for comment, and that the policy would be formally endorsed by school Governors.

The membership of the play working party was designed to reflect the school community as a whole: parents, Governors, breaktime supervisors, caretaker, teachers, Headteacher. In practice, membership of each working party was slightly different. But the principle of representing the main elements of the school community was adhered to. Each working party had Governor, parent, teaching staff and breaktime supervisor representation.

The significance of the play working parties cannot be overemphasised. Where the group worked well, there was an almost palpable sense of pleasure and surprise at simply thinking and planning together.

Where, however, the engagement was not genuine, where unresolved tensions obtruded, discussion degenerated into empty talk; meetings became mere ritual and no genuine progress could be made until difficulties were resolved.

What follows from this is the *practical* need to create a context for the exploration of ideas. Schools are not so constructed and organised to allow this easily to occur.

COUNTER-CULTURE

It is unusual for breaktime supervisors, teachers and Governors to consider ideas and concepts together. The mutual exploration of ideas occurs best in a context where the formal status of individuals melts into insignificance. Indeed, this is a precondition for any such exploration. Yet creating such a context runs counter to the hierarchical structure of schools.

Once engaged with, however, the process is fun, stimulating, sometimes surprising – and brings benefit to the school as a whole. Play working party members reported:

If everyone is moving forward together, then the success takes care of itself

The biggest thing we got from PLAYLINK was seeing how much we really wanted to change things. And we hadn't realised the work involved in looking at ourselves ... You had to explain what you meant ... questions [were asked] that seemed so simple. I couldn't answer without being truthful and sometimes I felt really upset inside.

A breaktime supervisor:

I always felt that some staff thought they were better than us. I don't think that they really understand our jobs. It was good to sit and talk about it together. They still expect the world, though (laughter).

TIME AND SPACE

It is difficult to exaggerate the extent to which the timetable dominates school life. To the author of this report at least, primary schools appear to offer few if any opportunities for dialogue between the different constituencies that comprise the school community. There appears little time for reflection, except perhaps directly on curriculum matters; meetings are wedged in between other pressing matters – supervision of children, coffee and lunch breaks, this or that lesson, parents to be interviewed – or at the very beginning or tail end of the day.

This is exemplified in the way space is allocated. There is no area where discussions can take place without impinging on some other necessary school activity. The school staff room is usually the venue for meetings – the only designated adult space apart from the toilets – and here teachers are either eating their lunch, drinking their coffee, or leaving on their way to a lesson.

This perpetual pressure on time potentially undermines the Play at School approach. It requires, above all, people's time. All the schools found that the scheme made greater demands on their time than initially envisaged. A high premium was placed on committee members attending all working party meetings; this sometimes made them difficult to organise. (It is worth noting here that one indicator of a school's commitment to seeing through the process on an

inclusive basis is its willingness to pay breaktime supervisors for attending meetings. This is quite aside from reviewing their standard level of remuneration) More than one working party admitted, politely, but with barely concealed weariness, that talking and thinking about play and play policy was difficult and frustrating in the sense that there was no immediate, tangible benefit that resulted from their labour. After a term and half of work, nothing could be pointed at and proclaimed useful and well-made.

However, changes in attitudes were taking place under the surface, to the extent that by the third term Headteachers agreed that the time had been well spent.

BREAKTIME AND BREAKTIME SUPERVISORS

Too often, the breaktime supervisor's function is conceived negatively: to give teachers the opportunity to replenish their energies before the business of education is resumed; to allow children to work off surplus energy.

Breaktime is characterised mainly in terms of its problem-generating potential. It is likely to become the focus of Headteacher, parental or Governor attention only when concerns are voiced about, for example, bullying, behaviour in general, health and safety, disruption caused by serving lunch, and the general notion that children should be doing something recognizable if not actually useful – 'traditional' games, perhaps.

It is not an accident that breaktime supervisors are one of the lowest paid groups in schools; that no paid time is allocated for them to meet and plan their work or to review their practice (do we actually think of supervisors having a practice?); that there is no breaktime budget beyond that needed for repairs; that management of breaktime staff is, too often, inconsistent and reactive; that lines of responsibility are blurred – for instance, do breaktime supervisors have independent authority at breaktime or are they required to refer to teachers or the Headteacher when there is a difficulty?

It is not sufficiently appreciated that to be responsible for some 200 or so children within a relatively unstructured framework and a physical environment that is barren and uninteresting is, in many ways, more complex and demanding than working within a classroom setting.

Breaktime supervisors themselves are often frustrated by the restricted interpretation placed on their role within school life, but how many schools have a mechanism that will allow this to be articulated, valued and responded to?

NO OFF-THE-PEG SOLUTIONS

The Play at School Scheme is predicated on the understanding that the problems and opportunities associated with breaktime are a whole school responsibility. It follows that there are no 'off-the-peg' technical solutions to 'solve' or enhance schools' experience of breaktime.

Only by addressing the school as a whole, focusing on values, understandings, management structure, staff status and policy development, will positive, long-term change be secured. This of course is linked to a general point about change: informed practice develops out of, and is based upon, values and principles. If it is not, then action is mechanistic, mere gesture.

THE LIMITATIONS OF TRAINING

Training in 'play' was not undertaken by any of the staff participating in the scheme. Given the reported gains resulting from the Scheme this may, at first, seem surprising. It certainly goes against the grain of the current orthodoxy which suggests that a prerequisite of change is staff attendance at training sessions.

Training, however, travels only along the surface of understanding and attempts, and can achieve, no more than the transfer of demonstrable skills. In contrast, an individual's understanding shapes and gives meaning to any given world. In the context of the Play At School Scheme, if play is not understood or valued, then the

attempt to transfer mere technical adeptness is to equip individuals with instruments that they may know how, but not when, to use.

This point is connected to the idea that the stance one takes, the understanding chosen, affects the way situations are read. A playground supervisor who understands and values children's capacity to make free choices, will be less prone to interfere in children's activities. The supervisors will of course want to ensure that the child is safe, but even here what is meant by safe will be governed by an understanding of play.

The practical effect of this perspective is demonstrated by what amounts to the schools' reclassification of mud. It retained its wet and mucky character but its place in the schools' demonology was undermined. A possibility had been discovered simply because a new understanding had been reached.

PLAYLINK'S ROLE

The PLAYLINK consultant's job was, in the first instance, to articulate a view about free play, associated concepts such as 'acceptable risk' and 'unacceptable risk', in a clear and uncompromising way. The aim was to highlight the different ways play is thought of and, specifically, how teachers' use of play in a school setting might diverge from, indeed contradict, play understood as something the child controls.

The consultant's wider task was to encourage the working parties to examine what a new approach to play in their school might mean in practice. This meant exposing to scrutiny the roles of, and the relationships between, the different elements of the school community, attitudes to children, the assumed anxieties of parents, and the mild feeling that all this free play sort of thing was potentially quite disruptive.

SECTION FOUR

Summary of evaluation findings

SKETCH OF THE PLAYGROUNDS

Before reporting the evaluation findings, including the views of children and members of the adult school communities, breaktime and the playground area need to be briefly described.

Each school had relatively small areas of tarmac huddled against the school buildings, surrounded by large areas of flat, virtually featureless grass fields that were out of bounds to children in the autumn/winter and with restricted access allowed in the spring/summer months. One school did have a coppice, but children were not allowed to enter it.

Prior to the scheme, breaktime could be characterised as being dominated not by children playing, but by adults' fear of mud, the elements, and a prevailing concern that a child might for a moment escape the concerned eye of a playground supervisor. Breaktime was, for children and adults alike, to be got through, not enjoyed.

THE EVALUATION

PLAYLINK's involvement with the schools ended in July 1995. In June 1997 an independent evaluation of the Scheme was undertaken by a consultant. The intention was to discover whether the changes that had occurred during the

course of the scheme, almost two years earlier, were firmly rooted in the culture and practice of the schools.

An independent evaluation was necessary to test one of the key claims of PLAYLINK's approach: that to secure long-term change, attitudes and values must be explicated; policy and practice aligned.

The evaluation was based on observation of a breaktime session in each of the schools, conversations with children, semi-formal interviews with Headteachers and analysis of responses to questionnaires completed by play working party members.

IMPACT OF THE SCHEME

The evaluation rightly cautions that 'three days of observation did not give a full picture of schools' and that children did not report that:

'Oh yes, the Play at School Scheme has changed our lives'

However:

Their comments ... related to the intentions of those involved in Play at School [Scheme]. In this case most young people do think playtime is fun and enjoyable and happily demonstrated that during the days of observation.

The evaluation recorded:

... throughout the three schools, there was no instance of 'serious' fighting, long arguments or ill-favour between staff and children. Problems were diffused quickly by both children and adults. Children were engaged, busy, happy, involved in life. Compare that with staff stories about the past – bullying; fighting; young people on the periphery; vandalism; boredom; quarrels and fighting erupting at the end of playtime – and the current picture is different.

One major experience that schools have gone through has been to take time out to look at their relationship to play and at ways of realising their commitment to creating enjoyable play opportunities for children. That seems to have catalysed a change.

Below is the evaluator's summary in list form of the effects she considered could either in whole or in part be attributed to the Scheme. The assessment is based on her observation of children at playtime, and discussions with staff and children.

Improved communication

- changes of attitude/more open attitude
- less aggression in the team
- less aggression on the playground
- staff team working together.

Changed attitudes towards play

- different priorities about facilities available at playtime
- children participating in deciding how to prevent – mainly boys – football dominating the playground
- discussions and some changes in attitude towards messy play
- dressing up clothes, equipment and toy library
- wet play – more organised;
- less aggression between staff and children contrasting with the previous period when arguments between staff and children occurred.

Completing unresolved issues

- old and dormant issues raised
- us and them relationship, where lunchtime staff have been seen as less able and less thinking
- raising of confidence of many staff
- troubles in staff team; for example, collusion, avoiding difficult issues, avoiding making difficult decisions were resolved.

Developing self-awareness

- increased understanding of colleagues, children and issues
- sharing knowledge, feelings and expectations
- mixed group essential for involving everyone
- finding out colleagues' views, getting to know them
- seeing colleagues as human – not as tolerated enemy
- working together, rather than 'trying to get her'.

THE PLAYGROUNDS

The evaluation also commented on schools' physical environment and the changes that had occurred as the result of the Scheme:

Two schools have been more successful than the other in tree planting and have better ... shade for hot weather. They have all tried to facilitate creative play without resorting to the provision of structures.

In list form, changes to the environment and the way the environment is used include:

- tree planting
- previously overgrown and forbidden areas have been forested and made useable
- fallen tree has been left for children's use rather than being cleared away
- paths have been cut
- avenues of trees leading to wooded area have been planted
- stepping stones put in place
- seating to allow for solitary and small group play.

The point was made that 'risk taking was not removed'.

SCHEME PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS

In aggregate, participants recorded:

- excellent facilitation, not domination
- working through stages together
- having opportunity to look at issues that have always been there
- looking at commitments that are difficult to fulfil
- having someone give us/others permission to hear each other
- seeing that others can contribute too
- hearing what midday supervisors had to say about other staff and their work
- facilitating tough self-examination and indirectly the departure of some staff
- the joy of having something that begins to express the concerns and commitment [to] play – not simply wanting to give up.

However, difficulties were mentioned. The process required:

- a lot of work
- a lot of thinking time
- considered time
- difficult self-searching
- willingness to work with others through difficult discussions
- a lot of monitoring, reporting back which was time consuming
- couldn't waffle your way through it – documentation was clear
- couldn't pretend. Contracting process made everything very clear

In addition, some participants highlighted difficulties inherent in the evaluation process:

- evaluation took place a long time after work with PLAYLINK complete. Difficult to remember what has changed
- we did not monitor work very well.

CONCLUSION

The evaluation concludes that the:

Play At School Scheme has a simplicity of design. It is bold in its claims for what is possible in children's play time, highlighting the potential there is to allow an identified school community to meet a variety of the play needs of its children. It does not sanctify play equipment as the playground saviour. It instead focuses on adult perceptions of play and examines how these perceptions help to create the play environment. It is an inexpensive scheme that can be used in different environments.

It demands time from participants – time that matches their spoken commitment, to look at attitudes, to look at their relationships with others, to consider what and who they are.

... Many of the changes that have come from schools' work with the scheme were made at the level of policy and management ... Schools were in essence provided with an opportunity to create value: a play policy; a play committee; a requirement to work together. Those basic terms formed the framework for each school to then work in their unique way.

Finally:

Staff are enthusiastic about their new relationship with play that now has a clearer and more focused expression after work with the Play at School Scheme. The children mostly behave as if they have a right to play, to take over the playground, to ask for information as they need it. Play at School, through the opportunity for consultancy, and, secondly, with considered use of financial resources, has gone some way to improving the quality of play [experiences] in these school communities. This pilot has been successful ...

Bernard Spiegel, PLAYLINK, February 1998

SOME FURTHER READING

Measure or Value: Exploring outcomes from play provision

Report of joint PLAYLINK/Portsmouth conference. Includes a presentation by Deb Caseberry, Headteacher Tudor School, detailing the process and outcomes of the Play at School Scheme at her school.

Policy and Process: PLAYLINK's Play Policy Guidance

Play Environments: A Question of Quality by Bob Hughes

A general guide including criteria for assessing quality play environments.

A Playworker's Taxonomy of Play Types

Notes linking daily practice to the research on play

The Essential PLAYLINKS

A compilation of selected articles from previous issues.

It's O.K. To Get Muddy

Article in ACE Bulletin on PLAYLINK's Play at School Scheme

Principles of Play Safety

Text of presentation given by Sandra Melville, Director, PLAYLINK

Play Provision: The Outcomes

Produced for PLAYLINK by Bob Hughes of Play Education

All the above are available from PLAYLINK

Social Life in School: Pupils' experience of breaktime and recess from 7 to 16 years

By Peter Blatchford. Published by Falmer Press.

Breaktime and the school: understanding and changing playground behaviour

Edited by Peter Blatchford & Sonia Sharp. Published by Routledge.

If you would like to discuss the Play at School approach, wish to order a PLAYLINK publication or require further information about children's play please contact PLAYLINK, FREEPOST, EDO 5600, London SW9 6BR or phone 0171 820 3800.



Linking Theory to Practice for Children's Sake

PLAYLINK believes:

- Each child is entitled to respect for their own unique combination of qualities, capacities, cultural and other values and for their point of view, whether from adults or from other children.
- The 'voice' of the child, their opinions and reactions, should be taken into account in all provision intended for them to the maximum degree consistent with health, safety and the principle of respect for the needs of others.
- Control of their own play activity is a crucial factor in enriching children's experience and enhancing their development. Play provision should be based on the principle of empowering the child and increasing their choices. This should include children's participation in devising, building and rebuilding their physical play environment.
- Safety and security are the child's right. A child cannot play freely in an environment which is dangerous or where they feel insecure. The physical surroundings, equipment and other resources at the play project must be free from unacceptable risk and the child must be able to trust the adults involved.
- Play is first and foremost for children's enjoyment and/or satisfaction. There should be no task or product required of play by those not engaged in it.