

# Raising attainment through Active Play

# Active Play

Active Play helps children be more physically active and contributes directly to Curriculum for Excellence outcomes in health and well-being.

The programme lasts 10 weeks and helps to increase physical activity levels during school as well as supporting pupils' emotional, social and cognitive development. Research has shown that children who are more physically active perform better in school and are more likely to have a healthier lifestyle into adolescence and adulthood, helping to close the attainment gap and supporting national outcomes.

Our third sector play specialists work in primary schools directly with class teachers and pupils to deliver Active Play.

The programme is aimed at Primary 3 and 4 classes and involves the whole class with support from class teachers and Support for Learning Workers.

At the end of the programme participating teachers and pupils will have the ability and resources to continue Active Play with the use of our online resource, toolkits, videos and additional training. In this way, Active Play also contributes to Continuous Professional Development allowing teachers and SfLW to develop new skills and embed the programme into practice within the school.

Active Play is part semi-structured games and activities, and part free play. The games are led by Play Workers, with teacher and pupil participation. The sessions always take place outside, without the need for specialist equipment, and focus on developing fundamental movement skills and increasing physical activity. Active Play is designed to be fun, inclusive and active.

**“Active Play improves behaviour, improves learning and helps our children to be better citizens for the future.”**

Maureen McKenna, Executive Director of Education Services,  
Glasgow City Council



# The time to play is now

In conjunction with Glasgow City Council as part of its Glasgow Improvement Challenge, we run Active Play in primary schools across in the city. GCC has to extend Active Play to as many of their 139 primary schools as possible.

Some of the key findings from an independent evaluation of term 1 were:

- Increased physically activity levels among participating pupils, and enhanced fundamental movement skills.
- The majority of class teachers taking part in the programme said pupils were more attentive in class following Active Play sessions.
- Staff identified improvement in pupil's problem-solving and creative thinking during the programme.
- Active Play helped form a behaviour strategy with pupils responding positively to Active Play as a behaviour incentive.
- Children and teachers had increased knowledge of physical activity and its benefits.

Active Play is fun, inclusive and easy for children and can make a significant difference to pupils' health and well-being helping to close the attainment gap.

Active Play:

- Is proven to be effective at increasing physical activity in primary-age children.
- Contributes directly to Curriculum for Excellence outcomes.
- Is inexpensive and easy to establish in schools.
- Supports teachers and staff to develop professionally and facilitate continued delivery.
- Includes a variety of resources to sustain and develop the programme.
- Works: physically active children learn better and have healthier, happier lives.

**“I feel that this is a very insightful way of supporting the raising of attainment... thinking outside the box, avoiding more tests and assessment pieces but actually looking at the emotional, mental and physical well-being, with the knowledge that success will only come if pupils are mentally, emotionally and physically fit.”**

Jane McShane,  
Headteacher, Royston  
Primary School



# Children need play

There are problems in Scotland which have serious implications for our children.

Children's sedentary behaviour is high with a third of six-year-olds spending as much as three hours a day in front of a screen. For some, sedentary time is as much as 12 hours a day. Fewer than 1 in 5 children in Scotland are meeting the **minimum** daily guidelines of one hour of physical activity.

This inactivity is a problem during school time too.

The knock-on effect of this is massive. Inactivity increases a child's chance of being overweight or obese and recent years have already seen an increase in childhood obesity. Inactive children are more likely to develop diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, asthma and arthritis.

Childhood physical inactivity has been linked to weaker bone structure leading to more bone fractures and osteoporosis. It is estimated that inactivity costs the NHS in Scotland £94m annually. Even at a young age, a lack of physical activity can have a detrimental effect on a child's mental health and well-being. The stakes for Scotland's children could hardly be higher.

These health issues, exacerbated by low physical inactivity, high sedentary behaviour and poor diet, are linked to poverty and deprivation, further widening the attainment gap for poorer children. Children born in deprived areas are being left behind and it is having a lasting effect on their lives, deepening existing inequalities.

Schools can and do address these issues but more needs to be done. Active Play is designed to increase a child's physical activity in a way which is fun and inclusive.

## 10-13 Months

Attainment gap between  
children from low- and high-  
income families  
aged 5.

### The effects of physical inactivity

- Increased childhood and adult obesity
  - Diabetes
  - Heart disease
- High blood pressure
  - High cholesterol
    - Asthma
    - Arthritis
  - Weak bones
- Mental health issues

## £94m

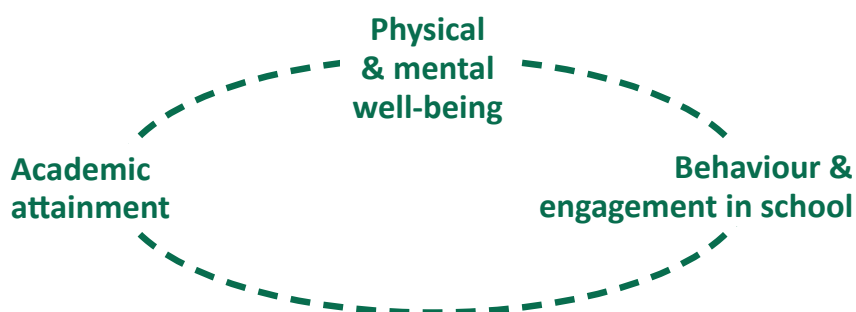
Annual cost to the NHS  
in Scotland of  
physical inactivity

# Play is serious

Active Play is simple: it boosts physical activity in children and helps them develop fundamental movement skills such as coordination and balance, all through playing physically active games.

And Active Play works: research into the programme by the University of Strathclyde showed Active Play reduced sedentary time and increased time spent doing physical activity by 40 minutes during a school day. What's more, 92% of children taking part in Active Play went on to play more outside of school time.

Increasing physical activity within schools is important because our own research has shown that as little as 11% of PE class time involves significant levels of physical activity. The average significant physical activity time during Active Play sessions is 30%.



'Virtuous cycle' identified by educational and physiological research

Active Play is not just a 'nice' idea. Our research is backed up by studies from the USA, Canada and Scandinavia which demonstrate the importance of outdoor physically active play in aiding a child's mental development; boosting cognitive ability, academic achievement, imagination, creativity and social skills.

Play is a fundamental part of a child's development and can be easily integrated into the school day.

## Benefits of Physical activity

### Physical

- Stronger bones and heart
- Weight control
- Improved quality of life
- Increased fitness

### Social

- Build social skills
- Make new friends
- Meet new people
- Social integration

### Cognitive

- Increased decision making
- Improved concentration
- Improved problem solving
- Improved academic performance

### Emotional

- Improved self-esteem
- Reduced anxiety and depression
- Improved self-confidence
- Reduced stress

**"The children don't realise that they are doing physical activity."**

Ms Di Pasquale, teacher,  
Wellshot Primary School

# Play works



Active Play is about increasing physical activity in a way that is fun, inclusive and active.

Through a combination of semi-structured games and activities and free, creative, child-led play, Active Play is designed to help children to gain fundamental physical skills such as running, jumping, throwing and catching. It also works to boost their confidence and motivation to use those skills, and to increase opportunities to be physically active.



Skills, identified by class teachers, developed through Active Play

The link between physical activity, mental alertness and cognitive development has been well-established and Active Play sessions have resulted in notable improvements in pupil concentration.

Active Play games are also designed to help children build important skills and attributes such as confidence, teamwork, risk-assessment, problem-solving and emotional resilience, helping to develop the whole child.

Research has also shown that being physically active in early life underpins lifelong physical activity leading to a healthier, happier future for Scotland.

**“A lot of these games use a group work framework with the kids having to work together, think on their feet, interact and communicate. It’s very transferable, the skills they are developing, and you can see it taking place in the classroom almost in tandem with what you see in the playground.”**

Mr Docherty, teacher,  
Royston Primary School

**“We are getting to see skills they’ve got outside of school and see how we can encourage them in the classroom.”**

Ms O’Neill, teacher,  
Crookston Castle Primary  
School



# Play is easy

A successful educational system is fundamental to a successful future; for our children, for our communities and for Scotland.

We want to help educators achieve their ambitions, and those of Scottish Government, to close the attainment gap and get it right for every child.

That's why we have developed the Active Play programme, a programme which helps primary school-age children develop and grow emotionally, socially, cognitively, and physically.

A programme which is proven to be fundamental to all children's ability to learn, think, and grow their imaginations, and is enormously beneficial to a child's health and well-being.

A programme which is easy and inexpensive to implement and comes perfectly naturally to every child in the world. It is something all children think is fun and they want to do.

A programme we want to make a fundamental part of the school day in Scotland.

**“Play is woven  
into the process  
of inquiry,  
curiosity and  
learning.”**

**Pasi Sahlberg, visiting  
Professor of Practice  
at Harvard University's  
Graduate School of  
Education**

The Active Play programme is run by Inspiring Scotland's Go2Play fund and implemented in primary schools in partnership with local play charities.

The programme was pioneered by play charity PEEK and then developed by Go2Play with support from Scottish Government.

It was expanded with additional play charities in 2014 and trialled and evaluated in communities and primary schools.

In 2016, Go2Play partnered with Glasgow City Council to bring Active Play to primary schools across the city as part of its attainment programme.

The programme is continually evaluated and is the subject of several research projects from University of Strathclyde's Physical Activity for Health Group. Continuous training and development is supported by physical activity social enterprise Agile.

Inspiring Scotland strives for a Scotland without poverty or disadvantage by taking collaborative approaches to solving deep social problems.

Through Go2Play, we want every child in Scotland to have the same opportunities to lead a healthy and happy life.



Level 1 Riverside House  
502 Gorgie Road  
Edinburgh  
EH11 3AF

0131 442 8760

[www.inspiringscotland.org.uk](http://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk)



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