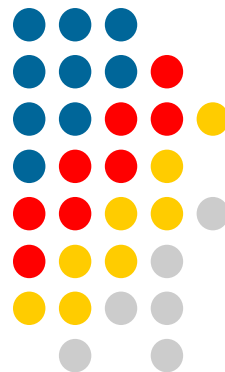


Children's Access to Play in Schools

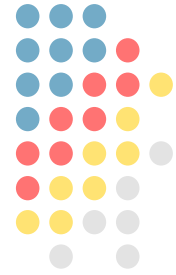
Quality Criteria

The Play-friendly School Label



Funded by the
Erasmus+ programme
of the European Union

Document Control



Reference: Children's access to play in school (CAPS)

Activity: IO2 – Quality Criteria

Author(s): V3 by Wendy Russell, UK

Character: Final agreed at partner Skype 19.09.18

Date: 19.09.18

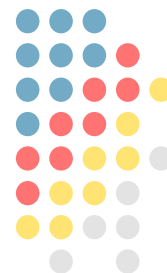
ISBN:

Disclaimer: This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.
Grant Agreement No. 2017-1-UK01-KA201-036679

Reference: Children's access to play in school (CAPS)



The Project

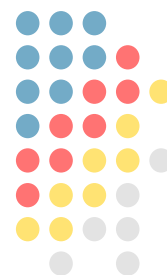


These quality criteria have been produced by the CAPS Consortium, 2018.

Play is in the core of a child's life. Play researchers suggest that play is children's default setting, their way of engaging with the world. It can contribute to the development of resilient capacities such as emotion regulation, stress response systems, attachment and an openness to learning. In addition, play's great contribution to life is its vitality and the pleasure it brings. This is more than a luxury, it gives us all a greater satisfaction in being alive. Children who can find time and space to play are more likely to be happier, more settled and more engaged in other aspects of school life. Although playing can emerge whenever conditions allow, restrictions on children's ability to move around their neighbourhoods without adult supervision, over-programming of children's lives, and the heavy focus on academic achievement all contribute to a reduction in 'free time' for children to just play.

Therefore, the six partners of the CAPS project are working to support schools to become more play-friendly. Drawing on the experience of the UK-based OPAL programme (Outdoor Play and Learning), a mentor supported school improvement programme, it has developed National Adaptation Plans for five of the partner countries, these quality criteria for schools to work towards a Play-Friendly School label, and a training course for staff.

Partners



University of Gloucestershire (coordinator)
(United Kingdom)

<http://www.glos.ac.uk>



Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung und Bildung
(Austria)

<http://www.gesob.at>



Palacký University
Olomouc

Palacký University Olomouc, Faculty of
Physical Culture (Czech Republic)

<http://www.upol.cz/>



Rogers Foundation
(Hungary)

<http://www.rogersalapitvany.hu/>



Gedania 1922 Association
(Poland)

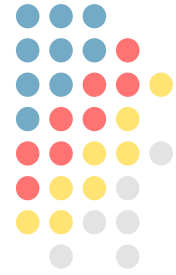
<http://www.gedania1922.pl>



TANDEM n.o.
(Slovakia)

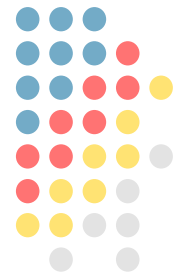
<http://www.tandemno.sk>

Contents



Document Control.....	i
The Project	ii
Partners.....	iii
Contents.....	i
The Play-friendly School Label	1
Why becoming a play-friendly school matters	2
What is a play-friendly school?	4
A few words about play	5
A whole school approach.....	7
QUALITY CRITERION ONE: THE SCHOOL HAS A LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE THAT SUPPORTS CHILDREN'S PLAY	10
QUALITY CRITERION TWO: THE SCHOOL HAS A WRITTEN STATEMENT ON HOW IT SUPPORTS PLAY	12
QUALITY CRITERION THREE: CHILDREN HAVE SUFFICIENT TIME FOR PLAY	16
QUALITY CRITERION FOUR: CHILDREN HAVE SUFFICIENT SPACE FOR PLAYING	19
QUALITY CRITERION FIVE: THE SCHOOL CULTURE SUPPORTS CHILDREN'S PLAY	22

The Play-friendly School Label



These quality criteria have been developed through an EU Erasmus+ funded project called CAPS (Children's Access to Play in Schools). Partners from six countries (UK as lead partner, Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) came together to learn from two UK models: playwork and a project to introduce better opportunities for playing into schools. Playworkers work in a range of settings with school-aged children and their main role is to support children in the creation of a space where they can play. The schools project is called OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning)¹ and has worked extensively in the UK and in Canada, Australia and New Zealand, to support schools to develop the structures and processes for creating happier play times.

Each partner of the CAPS project has carried out desk and field research in their own country to inform a National Adaptation Plan for how the ideas from playwork and OPAL might be introduced into schools. These plans have also informed the development of these quality criteria. In addition, a training course introducing principles and methodologies from playwork has been developed to support schools in developing the necessary capabilities to support children's play.

This document offers five quality criteria for a play-friendly school. Each criterion has

- a rationale based in scientific research
- indicators and guidance
- suggestions for evidence of how your school meets the criterion.

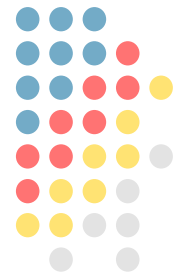
There are three levels:

- **BRONZE: getting started** (we want to become a play-friendly school and we are showing a commitment to this by looking at where we are now)
- **SILVER: working towards** (we have begun to take action towards *FULLY* meeting this criterion)
- **GOLD: review and development** (we have met this criterion, but are still committed to review and further development).

It can be used as a development tool to work towards being more play-friendly and it can also be used to show how the school meets the criteria. It can be used either for self-evaluation, where schools can publish evidence on their website, or, in some countries, evidence can be submitted to an accrediting body. Please contact the relevant organisation for your country for further information on the evaluation and assessment process and also on the training course.

¹ <http://outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk>

Why becoming a play-friendly school matters



The purpose of schools is to educate children, and we know that head teachers and other school staff are very busy with this. Why would schools want to think about being a play-friendly school on top of everything else they have to do? We think there are lots of reasons, here we offer two:

1. the first is that governments who have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child have a **duty to recognise, respect and promote children's right to play**, and this includes in school;
2. the second is that a play-friendly school is one where children are more likely to be happy, settled, in good mental and physical health, and open to learning; in other words, **making time and space for play in the school day helps rather than hinders children's education.**²

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right to play. In April 2013, recognising that article 31 is often called 'the forgotten right', the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child published a General Comment (GC17) giving guidance to governments on their responsibilities regarding article 31. The General Comment states that article 31 rights are



*fundamental to the quality of childhood, to children's entitlement to optimum development, to the promotion of resilience, and to the realisation of other rights ... Play and recreation are essential to the health and well-being of children and promote the development of creativity, imagination, self-confidence, self-efficacy, and physical, social cognitive and emotional strength and skills. They contribute to all aspects of learning. They are a form of participation in everyday life, and are of intrinsic value to the child, purely in terms of the enjoyment and pleasure they afford.*³

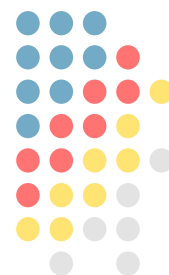
² Massey, W.V., Stellino, M.B., Mullen, S.P., Claassen, J. and Wilkison, M. (2018) 'Development of the Great Recess Framework – Observational Tool to measure contextual and behavioral components of elementary school recess', *BMC Public Health*, 18: 394; Lester, S., Jones, O. and Russell, W. (2011) Supporting school improvement through play: An evaluation of South Gloucestershire's Outdoor Play and Learning Programme, London: National Children's Bureau; Jarrett, O. (2013) *A Research-based Case for Recess*, US Play Coalition.

³ UNCRC (2013) General Comment 17: The right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts (Article 31), (p.4), available at: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2fGC%2f17&Lang=en

In outlining governments' responsibility for recognising, respecting and promoting article 31 rights, the General Comment specifically states that schools have a major role to play, including through the provision of outdoor and indoor spaces that afford opportunities for all forms of playing and for all children, and that the structure of the school day should allow **sufficient time and space** for play.

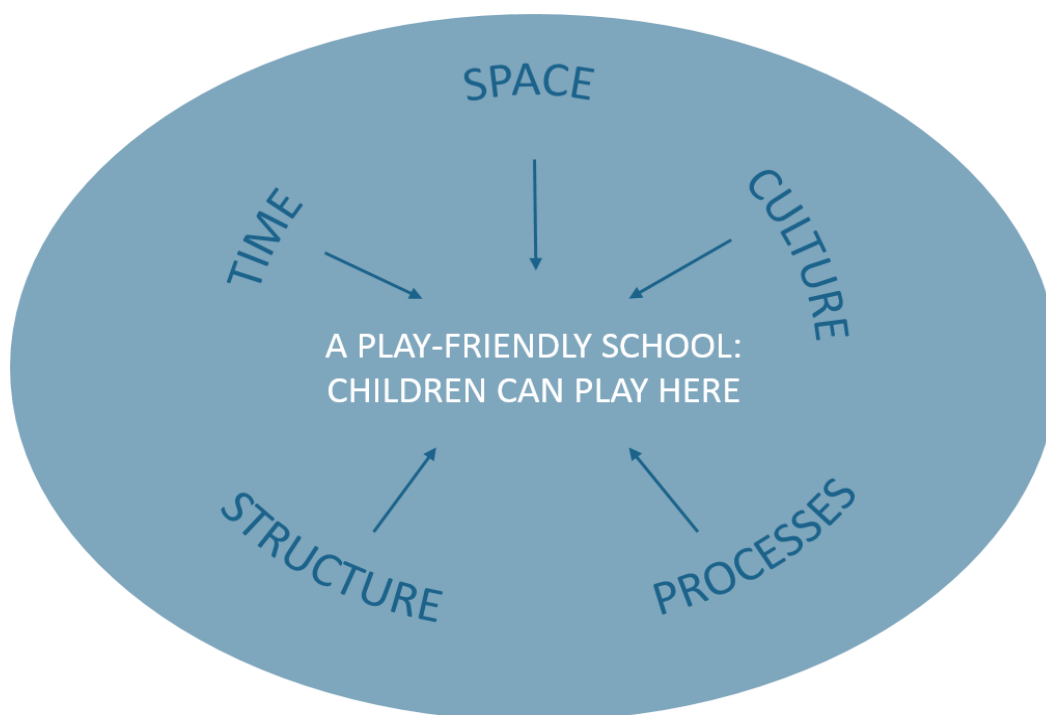
This on its own should be enough to make schools think about how they support children's opportunities to play whilst at school. The importance of play in the lives of children, together with changes in contemporary life that reduce children's opportunities to just play out, make it a matter for schools. **But there is more than this:** in schools that have made deliberate changes to support play, staff, children, families and other stakeholders all say how much better school life is for everyone. Children enjoy play times more and return to learning more readily; they seek less help with incidents and accidents; they are physically active and engage in a wide range of play forms with each other; there are fewer behavioural issues; staff-pupil relationships are better; school generally is a happier place to be. One headteacher who had been involved in a project to improve play times at his school spoke of how, prior to the changes, his lunchtimes were spent dealing with a queue of children who had been sent to him from the playground because of conflicts and other playground issues, but after the changes he rarely has children sent to him, and teachers no longer have to spend the first half hour of classes after dinner dealing with the fallout of playground spats.⁴

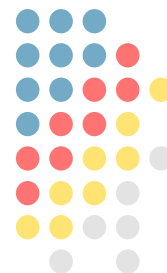
⁴ Lester, S., Jones, O. and Russell, W. (2011) Supporting school improvement through play: An evaluation of South Gloucestershire's Outdoor Play and Learning Programme, London: National Children's Bureau, available at <http://www.playengland.org.uk/resource/supporting-school-improvement-through-play/>



What is a play-friendly school?

In a play-friendly school, play is recognised, valued and supported in all its forms and across all of school life. This includes providing dedicated times and spaces for playing, and, where appropriate, making use of playful pedagogies as well as valuing and working with playful moments that may erupt in the course of everyday school life. Playing is children’s default setting. General Comment 17 states that play “takes place whenever and wherever opportunities arise”. This makes things much easier for schools wishing to support children’s self-organised play. Rather than providing or leading specific activities, it means schools need to pay attention to the conditions in which play can emerge. These conditions require sufficient **time** (QC3) and adequate **space** (QC4) as well as a whole school **culture** (QC5) that supports playing. These three strands are interrelated and interdependent: they operate as a whole, but are separated out here to form the framework for the quality criteria. Paying attention to the conditions that support playing also requires consideration of the structures (QC1) and processes (all QCs) that help the school move towards the ultimate outcome of being a play-friendly school where children can and do play.





A few words about play

This section takes some time just to think about the concept of playing and what it might mean for schools. Traditional and dominant ways of understanding the benefits of play focus on its relationship to children's cognitive, physical, social and emotional development. Research has shown positive correlations between play and:

- a range of **cognitive skills** (for example, paying attention, concentrating, constructing knowledge, making sense, communicating ideas, creativity, imagination, flexibility, divergent thinking, problem solving);
- **dispositions** and mood states (for example, curiosity and an openness to learning, enthusiasm, persistence, interdependence, resilience and self-efficacy);
- **social skills** (for example, relationships with peers and adults, emotion regulation, reciprocity, emotional well-being) and motor skills (for example, fine and gross motor skills, proprioception, co-ordination, spatial awareness, confidence, physical health and well-being).⁵

In addition,

- children's playground games contribute significantly to the development of **peer relations and networks, linguistic skills, adaptive skills, physical skills** and more;⁶
- school play times offer the opportunity for children to engage in **physical activity** (especially if outside space is available), countering excessive inactivity and obesity, and this can be significantly enhanced through design features, cultural shifts and other interventions;⁷
- children's ability to **concentrate** improves after play times, implying that removing breaks in order to focus on academic work may be counterproductive, particularly for children who have difficulty concentrating and therefore may be disruptive.⁸

⁵ Wood, E. and Attfield, J. (2005) *Play, Learning and the Early Childhood Curriculum*, Paul Chapman.

⁶ Baines, E. and Blatchford, P. (2011) 'Children's Games and Playground Activities in School and their Role in Development', in Pelligrini, A. (ed) *The Oxford Handbook of the Development of Play*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁷ See, for example, Hyndman, B.P., Benson, A.C., Ullah, S. and Telford, A. (2014) 'Evaluating the Effects of the Lunchtime Enjoyment Activity and Play (LEAP) School Playground Intervention on Children's Quality of Life, Enjoyment and Participation in Physical Activity', *BMC Public Health*, 14, available at <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2458-14-164>.

⁸ Jarrett, O. (2013) *A Research-based Case for Recess*, US Play Coalition, available at http://usplaycoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/13.11.5_Recess_final_online.pdf.

*The experimental and longitudinal data ... provide strong support for the role of recess in the primary school curriculum ... Unstructured breaks from demanding cognitive tasks seem to facilitate school learning, as well as more general social competence and adjustment to school.*⁹

However, there are also other ways of valuing play. As adults, we feel the need to impose a rational purpose onto something that appears to be purposeless, to bring a seriousness to play's nonsense and frivolity. Yet if adults only see playing as a way of gaining specific skills, they are tempted to direct children's play towards those skills ironically risking turning it into something other than play. There is significant evidence from the literature that says that play's benefits accrue from its characteristics of **self-organisation, emergence, unpredictability, flexibility and goallessness**.¹⁰

Children themselves may well see play time (recess) as a break from learning, where they can momentarily escape adult organisation of their time and space and co-create other worlds where the rational laws of the 'real' world need no longer apply but are not far away either. In their play, children take aspects of their everyday lives and turn them upside down in ways that make life either less scary or less boring.¹¹ The laws of physics tell us we cannot fly, but if you put your coat over your shoulder like a cape and do it up at the top, wave your arms and run and make the appropriate noises, then of course you can fly (and perhaps also save the world). These are moments where children feel the vitality of life. **The pleasure of playing is more than a mere luxury.** Together with other affective aspects of playing, it helps contribute to the **development of resilient capacities such as emotion regulation, stress response systems, attachment and an openness to learning**.¹² Children who can find time and space for self-organised play are more likely to be **happy, settled and engaged in other aspects of school life**. Yet for some children, play time is a time of stress, of conflicts and bullying, so a play-friendly school needs to do more than merely provide time for play during the school day.¹³

⁹ Pellegrini, A. and Bohn, C. M. (2005) 'The Role of Recess in Children's Cognitive Performance and School Adjustment', *Educational Researcher*, available at

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/1521/c046d6433f0bc992f0259ac58d6f5ca80133.pdf>.

¹⁰ See, for example, Lester and Russell (2008) *Play for a Change: Play, Policy and Practice – A review of contemporary perspectives*, London: National Children's Bureau, available at

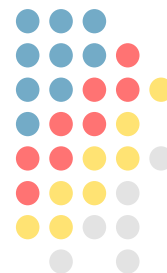
<http://www.playengland.org.uk/resource/play-for-a-change-play-policy-and-practice-a-review-of-contemporary-perspectives>.

¹¹ Sutton-Smith, B. (1997) *The Ambiguity of Play*, Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press.

¹² Lester, S. and Russell, W. (2008) *as above*

¹³ Massey, W.V., Stellino, M.B., Mullen, S.P., Claassen, J. and Wilkison, M. (2018) 'Development of the Great Recess Framework – Observational Tool to measure contextual and behavioral components of elementary school recess', *BMC Public Health*, 18: 394.

A whole school approach



Becoming a play-friendly school requires a whole school approach across the whole school community including children, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and families/carers. It is not a bolt-on addition to what schools already offer, it is an integral aspect of school life. It requires changes to the school ethos and culture, and to the organisation of time and space. Recognising, respecting and promoting children's right to play operates not only at dedicated play times but also in the classroom and throughout the school day. **Playing and learning are not opposite ends of a continuum, they are part and parcel of each other.** Whilst recognising the importance of instructional teaching, playful relationships (the use of humour, tolerance for ambiguity) and playful pedagogies (the use of playful methods for active learning) can help create effective learning environments and the emergence of creativity and divergent thinking.¹⁴

¹⁴ Tegano, D. W. (1990) 'Relationship of tolerance of ambiguity and playfulness to creativity', *Psychological Reports*, 66(3), pp. 1047-1056; Tobin, K., Ritchie, S.M., Oakley, J.L., Mergard, V. and Hudson, P. (2013) 'Relationships between emotional climate and the fluency of classroom interactions', *Learning Environments Research*, 16(1), pp. 71-89; Mardell, B., Wilson, D., Ryan, J., Ertel, K., Krechevsky, M. and Baker, M. (2016) Towards a Playful Pedagogy, available at <http://pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/Towards%20a%20Pedagogy%20of%20Play.pdf>.

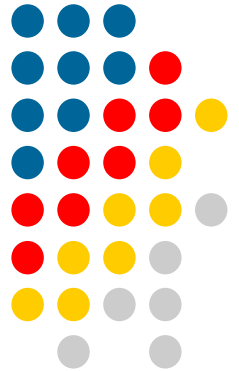
The Play-friendly School Label

Quality Criteria



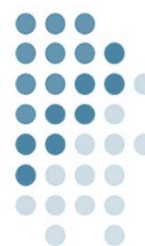
Funded by the
Erasmus+ programme
of the European Union

Children's Access to Play in Schools



QUALITY CRITERION ONE:

THE SCHOOL HAS A LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE THAT SUPPORTS CHILDREN'S PLAY



Rationale:

The experience of working with schools in the UK to improve play times for children has shown that the single most important factor in the success and sustainability of change is effective leadership across both policy and practice. The change towards a play-friendly school will not always be easy and may take considerable time; it needs strong leadership that can garner support from and work with children, staff, parents and wider stakeholders. The school needs someone who can lead and sustain strategic change and someone who can lead on the operations side of things.

Indicators and guidance	Getting started	Working towards	Review & development
<p>1.1 We have someone responsible for leading on strategic changes to improve and sustain the quality of children's play at school</p> <p>This is ideally the head teacher, but if not, it should be another member of the senior management team. They will need to have an understanding of children's play and its importance in school life, to advocate for play and to support it. They will also need to ensure that the school engages with children, all staff (teaching and non-teaching, including lunchtime staff, caretakers, administrators), parents and other stakeholders in developing strategic and policy changes. They will be responsible for periodic reviews of strategy and policy.</p>			
<p>1.2 We have someone responsible for leading on actions to improve and sustain the quality of children's play at school</p> <p>This person will be responsible for operations management: making and implementing decisions on the design and resourcing of spaces for play, supporting the staff working with children at play (including their training and professional development), documenting the school's actions and reviews on building a play-friendly school, and so on. They will need to be in a sufficiently senior position to</p>			

<p>be able to make decisions and implement them. In addition, this is the person who needs to be an enthusiastic advocate for self-organised play, well-trained and informed about supporting children's play in schools.</p> <p>In some small schools, it may be that it is the same person who is responsible both for strategy and operations. If this the case, schools are advised to identify another person who can act as champion, in order to ensure quality, continuity and sustainability.</p>			
--	--	--	--

Suggestions for evidence

This could include:

- Evidence from minutes of meetings or official memos/communications regarding the designation of strategic and operations management
- The written statement on play (see criterion 2)
- Records of discussions with children, all staff, parents and wider stakeholders, including issues raised and if/how they have been resolved
- Promotional material (including use of social media and websites to promote the concept of the play-friendly school)
- Records of the process of designing and implementing changes to the physical spaces dedicated to children's play (see criterion 4)
- Records of the processes of implementing changes in the culture of the school, including staff training and development (see criterion 5)

QUALITY CRITERION TWO:

THE SCHOOL HAS A WRITTEN STATEMENT ON HOW IT SUPPORTS PLAY



Rationale:

Here we borrow heavily from a useful document from UK OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) founder Michael Follett,¹⁵ drawing on his experience of supporting schools to become more play-friendly. Michael has been an external adviser to the CAPS project. He says schools should **start** by getting the culture right, using the OPAL **PARK** (Policy, Access, Risk, Knowledge) principles. **Policy** is about developing and publishing a clear, agreed **statement** that includes your school's values and principles regarding children's play and the actions and the actions you will take to support it (this criterion). **Access** is about what your school puts in place to make sure all children can access all resources for play all year round. **Risk** is about acknowledging there is no challenge without risk and being clear on how schools balance risk and safety. **Knowledge** refers to the importance of training and professional development for staff in understanding play and adults' role in supporting play. All the PARK principles feed into the development and review of the written statement.

It is worth saying a few words here about risk. Risk is understood as an integral aspect of children's play: most children are naturally curious, and development often requires some experimentation and risk taking (think about how children learn to walk). The thrill in taking risks (physical, social and emotional) is what brings play its vitality and therefore its benefits. In addition, taking physical risks helps children understand what their bodies can do and the process of assessing risks. **It is**

understandable that adults want children to be safe, but there is a growing body of evidence that shows that over-protection may be counterproductive and that healthy play encompasses risk taking on children's own terms. This requires an understanding of dynamic risk-benefit assessment. The CAPS training course addresses the topic of risk, and there are several useful resources available.¹⁶



¹⁵ Follett, M. (2016) *Making Playtime a Key Part of the School Day!*, available at:

<https://outdoorclassroomday.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/06/ECD-Making-Playtime-a-Key-Part-of-the-School-Day.pdf>

¹⁶ For guidance on risk in children's play, it is worth visiting the International School Grounds Association's 2017 Ubud-Höör Declaration on Risk in Play and Learning, available at

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56f1b6cbe707ebc63b90b4ef/t/59a5e842e45a7caca7180dea/1504045>

The **process of developing a written statement** on how the school supports children's play is in itself valuable, as many of the issues involved will be discussed, highlighting areas for attention and actions needed. The whole school community should be involved in its development and its periodic review. The statement itself acts as internally facing guidance for children, staff and families, and also as an externally facing statement of principle, commitment and practice.

Much of the detail in this section is also covered in other criteria; the written statement makes it visible.

Indicators and guidance	Getting started	Working towards	Review & development
<p>2.1. We have a written statement that includes our understanding of the nature and value of play, showing an appreciation of the importance of self-organised play</p> <p>It is important to differentiate self-organised play from adult-directed activities that might be playful. Both are important, but for play times (programmed times throughout the school day when there are no other demands on the children), the focus should be on 'free' play that is not directed by adults (see criterion 5). Given this, schools may want to develop guidelines for boundaries on the key issues regarding children's self-organised playing: risk, dirt and the freedom to play how they want.</p> <p>The statement should include a set of values, principles and beliefs and an action plan for practical improvement and review.</p> <p>The values, principles and beliefs will guide all decision-making on actions to improve the quality of play. Actions should state when they will be implemented, who will be responsible, and include a process for review.</p>			
<p>2.2. We have involved the whole school community in the development and review of this statement</p> <p>This means that children themselves, families/carers and non-teaching staff should be involved in discussions about the statement as well as teaching staff and school management.</p>			

[124854/ISGA+Risk+Declaration+--English.pdf](#); or the UK Children's Play Safety Forum (2013) *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide*, available at <http://www.playengland.org.uk/resource/managing-risk-in-play-provision-implementation-guide/>; or Gill, T. (2018) *Playing it Safe? A global white paper on risk, liability and children's play in public space*, available at <https://bernardvanleer.org/app/uploads/2018/05/White-paper-Playing-it-safe-Tim-Gill-May-2018.pdf>

<p>2.3. The statement shows how the school is committed to supporting children's play and creating sufficient time, space and permission</p> <p>'How' is the important word here: the statement has to say what programmed times are available for children to play when there are no other demands on them, as well as actions taken to make space available and the adult approach to supporting self-organised play. In addition, it needs to include how play will be supported at other times during the school day (e.g. playful pedagogies, an openness to playful moments that might arise opportunistically) – see criterion 3.</p>			
<p>2.4. The statement shows how we will make spaces and times for play accessible to all children (girls and boys, disabled children, children with different backgrounds, families, cultures, etc.) and in all weathers</p> <p>This could include things like designing spaces and introducing practices to facilitate all children's play, including indoor and outdoor spaces; making sure that care routines for Disabled children or behaviour management strategies do not mean that children miss out on any of their play time; making sure that children can play out in all weathers through the provision of storage for wet weather clothes and footwear. It is important that families/carers are involved in discussions about outdoor play where children and their clothes may get wet and dirty.</p>			
<p>2.5. The statement clearly outlines the school's approach to risk-taking and how we balance risk and benefit</p> <p>This should recognise the importance of risk-taking in children's play and the school's approach to risk-benefit assessment. Again, this is something that needs discussing with parents, showing how the school will approach balancing opportunities for risk and keeping children safe.</p>			
<p>2.6. The statement shows how we will develop our knowledge of play and how to support it, through recruitment, training and professional development programmes for staff and parents</p>			

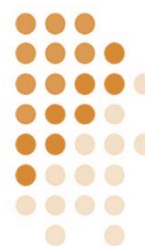
It is important to keep informed of the latest thinking about children's play; staff changes also will necessitate staff development opportunities so that staff and parents can understand the importance of self-organised play and how to support it at school through a sufficiency of time and space and an appropriate culture across the whole of school life			
2.7. The statement identifies the people responsible for strategic and operations management in improving opportunities for children to play at school See criterion one. Including this in your public statement embeds the action of identifying or recruiting and developing key people to develop and sustain good opportunities for children to play over the long term.			

Suggestions for evidence

Clearly, the statement itself is the main piece of evidence here, together with evidence of the process of its development, of issues that have arisen and if/how they have been resolved. If the school has a staff development policy, this can provide evidence for this criterion.

QUALITY CRITERION THREE:

CHILDREN HAVE SUFFICIENT TIME FOR PLAY



Rationale:

General Comment 17 on article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that governments need to ensure children have **sufficient** time and space for playing. It highlights a particular role for schools:

*School environments [should] provide a major role in article 31 rights, including: physical environments for play, sports, games and drama; active promotion of equal opportunities to play for boys and girls; safe playgrounds and equipment, accessible for all children; **adequate time during the school day for play and rest**; a curriculum which includes cultural and artistic activities; and **a pedagogy which offers active, playful and participatory activities and learning**.¹⁷*

The play-friendly school label encompasses time that is dedicated to play (when there are no other demands made on children), the use of playful pedagogies when appropriate, and an openness to children's playfulness in the rest of school life. These three aspects are explained further below.

Indicators and guidance	Getting started	Working towards	Review & development
<p>3.1. We make sufficient time available as a part of the timetable for children's self-organised playing when there are no other demands on them</p> <p>Each school's organisation of time will differ, including the length of the school day, so times are not specified.</p> <p>A minimum standard would be that 12.5% of the school day should have times for playing when there are no other demands, with at least one block of time for children to engage in playing uninterrupted. An aspiration would be for 20%. So, for a 6 hour school day, this would mean a minimum of 45 minutes and an aspiration to achieve at least 72 minutes.</p> <p>'Other demands' includes, for example, eating snacks or lunch, queuing for lunch, and care routines for Disabled children.</p>			

¹⁷ International Play Association (IPA) (2013) *Summary of UN CRC General Comment 17 on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts*, available at http://ipaworld.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/IPA-Summary-of-UN-GC-article-31_FINAL1.pdf

<p>3.2. Times programmed for play are honoured and not taken away</p> <p>Although schools may have programmed times for playing, these are sometimes taken away for several reasons, including as a form of punishment, or if children have not finished work, or for care routines for Disabled children. If disabled children miss the first few minutes of play times for care routines, this is often when groups are formed and play scenarios established, and they are likely to miss out as a consequence, exacerbating their sense of exclusion.¹⁸</p> <p>Using the withdrawal of play time as a punishment can colour the whole of the rest of the day, and for children who find it difficult to sit still and concentrate can be counter-productive.¹⁹</p>			
<p>3.3. We consider making time for playful pedagogies</p> <p>Playful pedagogies may not always be appropriate, but a play-friendly school will use them whenever they are. This criterion requires you to actively consider the school's approach to playful pedagogies and justify decisions made.</p> <p>Playing is a powerful way to learn and can be used in the classroom to encourage active and enjoyable approaches to learning. There is always a tension between education's imperatives to learn specific things and play's characteristics of spontaneity, unpredictability, non-utility and so on. If there is too much direction, can we still call it playing? One study²⁰ suggests that playful learning is situated at the overlap of three characteristics: choice (children's autonomy, empowerment, ownership and intrinsic motivation), wonder (curiosity, challenge, engagement, novelty, surprise, fascination) and delight (enjoyment, satisfaction, excitement, inspiration, pride, belonging). Dewey tells us, "To be playful and serious at</p>			

¹⁸ Woolley, H., Armitage, M., Bishop, J., Curtis, M. and Ginsborg, J. (2006) 'Going Outside Together: Good practice with respect to the inclusion of disabled children in primary school playgrounds', *Children's Geographies*, 4(3), pp. 303-318.

¹⁹ Jarrett, O. (2013) A Research-based Case for Recess, US Play Coalition, available at http://usplaycoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/13.11.5_Recess_final_online.pdf.

²⁰ Mardell, B., Wilson, D., Ryan, J., Ertel, K., Krechevsky, M. and Baker, M. 2016) *Towards a Playful Pedagogy*, available at <http://pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/Towards%20a%20Pedagogy%20of%20Play.pdf>

the same time is possible, and it defines the ideal mental condition". ²¹			
3.4. We pay attention to and work with moments of playfulness throughout the school day Play is not only a discrete time- and space-bound activity, it will erupt whenever the conditions allow: in the classroom, in the queue for dinner, in the corridor. Sometimes, playful moments are understood as disruptive or cheeky. A play-friendly school recognises the potential of these moments for experiencing joy and togetherness. This does not mean anything goes, and there will be occasions when banter and jokes are not appropriate, but a play-friendly school sees these as the exception rather than the rule and is not threatened by them. ²²			

Suggestions for evidence

This could include:

- sections of the written statement on play that address this criterion
- evidence of what this looks like in practice: reflections and stories from staff and children
- children's records (for example, other ways of responding to children's disruptive behaviour other than withdrawal of play times, disabled children's care routines, etc.)
- feedback from children, for example from school councils or similar structures

²¹ Dewey, J. (1910) *How we think*, Lexington, Mass: D.C. Heath, p. 218), available at https://brocku.ca/MeadProject/Dewey/Dewey_1910a/Dewey_1910_p.html.

²² See, for example, Hannikainen, M. (2001) 'Playful Actions as a Sign of Togetherness in Day Care Centres', *International Journal of Early Years Education*, Vol. 9(2), pp. 125-134.

QUALITY CRITERION FOUR: CHILDREN HAVE SUFFICIENT SPACE FOR PLAYING



Space is far more than the physical features; creating conditions that support play requires paying attention to the culture and atmosphere of the space as well, the ways in which space is produced. The two are interdependent, but they have been separated here make it easier to address details. It is important to pay attention to the physical features of space and the resources available for playing; equally, the right atmosphere has to be co-created where children feel safe and able to play, and staff supervising children's play appreciate ways to support rather than direct or unnecessarily constrain children's play. This criterion looks at the physical aspects and the following and final one considers the atmosphere and culture.

In the development of these criteria and indicators, efforts have been made to take into account the different resources schools have and the different contexts in which they operate, aiming for a reasonable balance between the ideal and the possible. The



bottom line is that schools look closely at their use of time, space and staff and make the best of what is available in terms of supporting conditions for play. Time, space, materials and attitudes should support as wide a range of play forms as possible. A truly play-friendly school will have both indoor and outdoor space available for playing; if there is no outdoor space, schools will have to be as inventive as possible with indoor space. Schools should also consider making quiet indoor space available for reading, board games, and so on. However, it does not necessarily need lots of specialist play equipment.

UK landscape architect Simon Nicholson found that the more varied a space is, and the more stuff that children can play with in lots of different ways, the more inventive and engaging the play will be. He called this a theory of loose parts.²³ This doesn't mean buying lots of expensive equipment, far from it. It means having lots of stuff that you can find mostly for free, or that people can donate: sticks and twigs, earth, water, sand, tyres, wood, fabric, cardboard, crates, household and office objects, string, tape, wool, and so on. The main thing is that there is plenty of it and there are no predetermined ways of using it.

²³ Nicholson, S. (1972) The Theory of Loose Parts: An important principle for design methodology [online], *Studies in Design Education and Craft*, 4(2), p5-14.

Indicators and guidance	Getting started	Working towards	Review & development
<p>4.1. We make as much outdoor space as possible available for playing in all weathers through design and the availability of outdoor clothes and footwear</p> <p>The ideal here is that children should be able to play outside as much as possible. It is recognised that some schools may not have much space available for children's play, particularly outside. However, this indicator requires schools to consider the space that is available and bring as much of it as possible into use for children's play. This might mean rethinking areas of the school (indoors and outdoors) that have not previously been available, or that are used for different purposes (for example, car parking). Playing outside should not be unduly restricted by the weather. Schools should consider encouraging the provision of suitable outdoor clothing, including footwear, and to accommodate the storage of outdoor clothing (for example, through the provision of racks for wellington boots).</p>			
<p>4.2. The physical environment supports a wide range of forms of play, including risk taking</p> <p>Indicators 4.3-4.6 consider the range of environmental features and resources that can stimulate many different forms of playing. Discussion on the benefits of risk in children's play can be found in Criterion 1.</p>			
<p>4.3. The physical space is as diverse as possible, with different heights, materials, objects, features, slopes, etc.</p> <p>For outdoor spaces, this could include trees, bushes, slopes, dips, as well as a wide range of resources (see also indicator 4.6). Schools may need to be creative in making indoor space suitable for physical forms of playing. Spaces should also be available for quieter forms of playing.</p>			
<p>4.4. Children can build and adapt spaces for playing, rest, refuge, observation and socialising</p> <p>This means making available a range of spaces and resources that children can use for den making, hanging out, pretend play, reading, etc. Indoor spaces can provide</p>			

opportunities for quieter forms of playing such as reading, computer games and so on.			
4.5. Children can be physically active in a variety of ways There are opportunities to run, jump, climb, swing and move through the space in multiple ways.			
4.6. A wide range of plentiful fixed and replenishable resources is available for playing in variable ways This does not necessarily mean only purchasing specialist play equipment; best use should be made of freely available natural resources and 'loose parts' (see the introductory rationale for this criterion).			

Suggestions for evidence

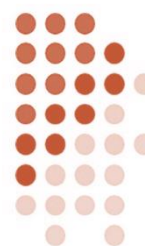
This could include:

- space audits;
- records of how spaces have been changed and developed, including how spaces and resources are made available, for example, meeting notes from friends and/or parent committees;
- plans and photographs of spaces and, if allowed, of children playing;
- observations of children's use of the space, including small moments of nonsense that often arise in the midst of playing;
- schools might like also to introduce 'mappings' of children's movements and encounters through the space: drawing maps of the space and using the maps to produce a range of documentation on how the space works. This can include lines of movement (tracing a child/group of children, or an object or a member of staff); recording moments of playing in particular spots in the space; identifying spaces of significance to members of staff (and why – this method helps bring to the fore our affective relationship with space); and other creative methods. The point of this is to look not at individual children but at how the space works, how its materiality and affective atmosphere supports or constrains playing and making changes as a result.²⁴ This approach to documentation also works for criterion 5.

²⁴ For more on this approach, it might be helpful to look at an action research project carried out on an adventure playground in the East End of London, UK: <http://eprints.glos.ac.uk/3311/1/Co-creating%20a%20Play%20Space%20300914.pdf>.

QUALITY CRITERION FIVE:

THE SCHOOL CULTURE SUPPORTS CHILDREN'S PLAY



Design and materials are important, but a space does not become a play space until children play there, and without the right culture a school cannot be play-friendly. Developing a culture that supports play requires a commitment to and an understanding of how children's play arises. It requires an explicitly stated commitment (criterion 2), knowledge (through training and/or other forms of professional development), practices that support rather than constrain playing and a growing capacity to pay attention to how children's play emerges from whatever is to hand. It is important that this culture is a whole school culture, including teaching and non-teaching staff, management, families/carers and children. This means looking at *how* the space works rather than why children play or whether they are playing in ways that might be seen to bring adult-desired benefits.

The best way to do this is through observing how children co-produce play spaces themselves from whatever is to hand, given the opportunity. Watch how they move through the space, how they encounter other objects and children, how play develops in largely unpredictable, spontaneous and opportunistic ways. Over time, through sharing observations, stories and maps, the school community can develop a sense of how the space works and make changes that can leave the space more open for playing. Once adults feel comfortable in stepping back a little, bringing a 'low intervention, high response' approach,²⁵ they are also likely to develop a sense of awe at children's inventiveness and ability to sort things out for themselves.



Indicators and guidance	Getting started	Working towards	Review & development
5.1. There is an overall playful feel at play times It may seem strange to have as an indicator something that is not possible to measure, but in a sense, that is the point. If a space supports playing, it is felt in the atmosphere,			

²⁵ This is one description of a playwork approach, originally coined in *Best Play*, published in 2000 by the National Playing Fields Association, PLAYLINK and the Children's Play Council.

and this develops from a sense of licence and permission that it is ok to play.			
5.2. Staff and parents/carers are supported to develop knowledge and practices that can support playful pedagogies and children's self-organised play For staff, this is likely to be through training ²⁶ and/or other approaches to professional development, including opportunities to share observations, mappings and other forms of documentation with other staff. Schools could consider involving parents/carers in open days, training or other discussions.			
5.3. Staff work sensitively to support playing rather than unnecessarily constraining it The attitude of staff is crucial for a play-friendly school. Supporting self-organised play requires developing a 'low intervention, high response' approach and, when appropriate, a playful attitude. Schools should show how the staff have developed strategies for if, when and how to intervene, aiming for play to be as self-organised as possible, particularly at dedicated play times.			

Suggestions for evidence

This could include:

- records of training and professional development undertaken by staff;
- documentation of the space as for criterion 4;
- records of discussions of documentation and ongoing changes made as a result.

²⁶ There will be a training course developed by the CAPS project, details can be found on the website: <http://www.playfrendlyschools.eu/>