A young girl with short brown hair is shown from the waist up, wearing a bright pink t-shirt and plaid shorts. She is smiling and has her hands raised in front of her face. A large, pink, sparkly hula hoop is around her waist. The background is plain white.

# Positive PlayGrounds Evaluation Report

**March 2008**



**From school play-grounds to school 'play-scapes'**

**An Evaluation of PlayBoard's  
Positive PlayGrounds Initiative**

*March 2008*



**“The best play environment for children are those, which are developed on the basis of children’s natural play needs taking into account different developmental periods including the social, physical and cognitive forms of play”.**

Malone and Tranter, 2003

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## Executive Summary

PlayBoard is the lead agency for the development of children's and young people's play in Northern Ireland. Since its inception in 1985, PlayBoard has campaigned, lobbied, raised awareness and developed partnerships in order to put play on the agenda of policy makers and resource providers.

The agency works at strategic and operational levels and has developed a number of innovative projects to support and encourage play across social policy priorities e.g. health, education, participation, social development.

PlayBoard developed the Positive PlayGrounds project in response to several factors, including the increase in childhood obesity, requests from schools for training, significant investment in playground markings and concerns that playgrounds were not being used to optimal levels.

PlayBoard initially attracted funding from the Esmee Fairbairn foundation to research, develop and pilot training in 25 schools across Northern Ireland. Further funding was provided by the Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western Physical Activity Coordination Groups.

The success of this pilot led to a fully developed 6 session training programme for adults who work with children in playgrounds which was open to all schools. Findings indicate that the programme has had a very significant positive impact on children within school playgrounds and has fully met all of its aims:

- Develop the provision of quality play/learning opportunities in primary school playgrounds.
- Offer training & development opportunities for those adults working in schools.
- Encourage the development of children's social, personal & physical well-being through participation in the programme.

The evaluation of the findings also resulted in five recommendations.

***"The care we show, as a community in how we design and build our children's play space, results in our children feeling cared for and respected" (Adam Bienenstock, 2003)***

## **Introduction**

Conceptually, schools conceive break-times as the periods when their formal primary education purpose is temporarily suspended. Break-time is a time for teachers to take a well earned break, to meet each other, have a coffee or eat lunch. It is also a period for children to move about, refuel, go outside and socialise.

Research commissioned by the Royal Bank of Scotland in 2004 found that a third of children never play outdoors. For those without adequate play provision at home or nearby, the play provision and support provided by a school may represent a child's only opportunity to engage in physically challenging outdoor play.

Despite this, many school playgrounds in Northern Ireland are little more than flat and uninspiring pieces of tarmac. Given that children spend up to a quarter of their school day in the playground, it is essential that in these spaces, children have access to positive outdoor play/learning opportunities, fun and stimulating playtimes.

Empirical evidence suggests that if children experienced more positive 'playtimes' they would then have improved behaviour and be more capable of developing their academic work when back in the classroom.

When asked prior to the development of the pilot project, school principals identified anti-social behaviour, mucking around and poor supervisory skills as some of the issues needing addressed in the playground.

PlayBoard's Positive PlayGrounds initiative was established in 2006 in response to, and motivated by, a number of issues and concerns:

- childhood obesity levels in Northern Ireland;
- an evaluation of the Big Lottery Out Of School Hours Learning programme;
- organisational concern that school playgrounds were not being used to optimum potential to address children's holistic development and play needs;
- enquiries from primary schools who had decided that their playgrounds needed to be improved; and
- significant investment by Education and Library Boards for schools to implement playground markings.

## **1.0 Scope of the Study**

### **1.1 Defining Play**

The child's right to play is enshrined in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989);

*"1. State Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.*

*2. State Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic and recreational and leisure activities."*

Article 31 moves play from an acknowledgement of need, to recognition of a right, for all children. Play is vital to the holistic development of all children and young people. It is a fundamental and intrinsic drive that provides the channel for physical, emotional, intellectual, social and emotional development. The unquestionable benefits of play extend beyond the visible signs of happiness, enjoyment, concentration and mastery.

However, due to its multiplicity, there are many aggregate and conflicting views when trying to describe or define play. However, what all the theorists have in common is the desire to prove that play is a vital aspect of childhood.

Play is a hugely powerful tool when children are given the freedom to follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way and for their own reasons. Through play, children can explore the world around them and make meaning of it for their own lives. Play combines learning with life experiences.

Play can be described as; "*Freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child. It can be fun or serious... by playing children learn and develop as individuals and as members of the community.*" Hughes and King (1984)

## **1.2 Positive PlayGrounds**

Positive PlayGrounds is a school based programme which was developed to encourage schools to re-examine their policy and practice approach to break-time playground experiences.

The programme was designed to enhance this valuable and important space within the school estate, and enable schools to develop strategies for encouraging physical and social development amongst children during playtime recess periods.

From the onset PlayBoard firmly believed that PLAY should be the driving force behind the development of the project and thus focused on the promotion of positive play experiences for children within the school environment.

The basic training programme consists of 6 sessions and is primarily aimed at the adults working and supervising in the school playground. The programme can be further enhanced by an additional session which focuses on the development of children and young people's consultation and/or participatory councils.

The programme includes examination of the importance of, and theoretical framework, which supports play; the role and value of play in formal and informal education and the key role of the adult, and their ability to either facilitate or adulterate play in the playground.

Additionally, concepts such as loose parts, imaginative props, wet playtimes, playground buddies/squads, playground needs assessment, behaviour management and action planning are included. Finally participants partake in a practical fun games and activity session where theory and practice merge.

PlayBoard also furnish schools with resources and a report with recommendations tailored to their specific needs.

### **1.3 Evaluation Aims and Objectives**

The evaluation aimed to find out the impact of Positive PlayGrounds in schools and whether it had met its aims and objectives successfully.

#### **Aims:**

1. Develop the provision of quality play/learning opportunities in primary school playgrounds.
2. Offer training & development opportunities for those adults working in schools.
3. Encourage the development of children's social, personal & physical well-being through participation in the programme.

#### **Objectives:**

- To improve children's motivation, behaviour and attainment through the provision of quality play and learning opportunities for children during playtimes.
- To engage the adult staff in the school to develop strategies for improving playtime opportunities.
- To support the Playground Supervisors in their role and understanding of play and play development and how it relates to learning.
- To develop strategies to enable children to engage in the process.
- To allow the children to take responsibility for their playtime opportunities.
- To ensure ownership and sustainability are built into the process.
- To produce a 'Positive Playground Pack' for practical usage in primary schools.

***"It is ridiculous to teach children to lead creative lives in the classroom if we turn them into a playground where they have nothing to do but fight and fall down" (English Headmistress, Hurtwood, 1968)***

## **Section two: Policy context and Literature review**

### **2.1 Policy Context**

#### **Revised Curriculum**

The Revised Northern Ireland Primary Curriculum - Key Stages 1 and 2 promote a play-based approach to formal education. During the Foundation Stage children will have begun to develop dispositions to learn. The curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2 aims to provide children with exciting opportunities to explore and develop their interests, talents and skills across all six areas of the curriculum and to develop the basis for making informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives.

#### **Extended Schools**

In June 2006 the Department of Education (DE) revealed how £10 million allocated as part of the Children's and Young peoples Package would be allocated to develop extended schools across Northern Ireland.

#### **Our Children and Young People Our Pledge – 10 Year Strategy**

The focus of the strategy is to improve outcomes for children and young people. The strategy aims to ensure that all children and young people are healthy, living in safety and with stability, achieving economic and environmental well-being. These high level outcomes are set out in the strategy's outcomes framework, which also includes learning, achieving and enjoying; making positive contributions to both community and society; and living in a society which respects their rights.

## **Draft Play Policy for Northern Ireland**

Identified as a key driver for the 10 year children and young peoples strategy, the draft policy was launched in October 2006.

### **2.2 Literature Review**

#### Benefits of Play

Play is an inherent and deeply rooted element of the life cycle of human beings. Play is the highest expression of a child's participation with, and within, their social and environmental construct.

Children naturally explore, test and push social, emotional, physical, creative, cultural, spiritual, and intellectual boundaries and capacity through play.

According to Hughes (2001) "**play is the culture of childhood.**"

Irrespective of gender, culture, race, ability or disability, play is the intrinsically motivated vehicle that children use to explore and make sense of their world.

The profile of play has increased significantly in recent years. A growing body of empirical evidence clearly points to play as being a simple and natural solution to address, what appear to be, a range of complex social policy problems.

#### Obesity

In addition to the above empirical evidence, there also was compelling new research which motivated PlayBoard to develop a school-based play project.

In 2004, the Royal Bank of Scotland commissioned research which found that in the UK over one third of children never play outside and that almost half of children spend more than 3 hours each day watching TV or playing computer games.

Childhood obesity is increasing at an alarming rate. In Northern Ireland, a quarter of children entering primary school are deemed to be clinically obese or overweight, with obesity causing around 450 deaths each year (*Fit Futures, 2002*).

Medical evidence has stated, a reduction in obesity can be achieved by:

“reducing television and promote playing. Opportunities for spontaneous play may be the only requirement that children need to increase their physical activity.” (*William H Dietz – British Medical Journal, 2001*).

This is supported by the World Health Organisation who have stated that unstructured vigorous physical play is one of the most effective ways for children to burn off calories. 60 minutes per day is recommended. (*Professor Roger Mackett, (2004) Making children’s lives more active, updated edition, London: Centre for Transport Studies, University College, London*)

#### Holistic Benefits of Play

The benefits of play for mental health and emotional wellbeing are also well established. For healthy brain growth and development, children should experience situations that present challenge, risk and problem solving. Play requires initiative and creativity.

The social benefits of outdoor play perform a key role in childhood development. Through outdoor play, children and young people become socially active and develop resilience. For many the friendships formed through play provide a lasting bond with peers that continue into adulthood. This becomes part of an individual’s support network that enables them to share life experiences in a positive and more meaningful way.

#### School Play

Research commissioned by the Northern Ireland Children’s Commissioner found many more children want more time for recreational play and rest during the school day (*NIO News Release, 5 June 2006*).

This followed other studies that proved that the longer children work without having a breaktime, the less attentive they are (*Pellegrini, Anthony, D. and Blachford, Peter (2002) The Psychologist Vol. 15 No 2, pp 60-62*).

Although our understanding of child development and our teaching methods have undergone radical revision during the last century, playgrounds today are virtually indistinguishable from those of a hundred years ago. Change has been slow, in part because designers know nothing about child development and developmentalists and educators know nothing about design (*Mindspring, 2007*)

Evidence shows that introducing something as simple as loose parts can have a significant influence "In any environment, both the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it (*Simon Nicholson, 1971*)"

***"The way young people learn to interact with peers is by interacting with their peers and the only place this is allowed to happen in schools is at recess...They don't learn social skills being taught lessons in class."***

*Anthony D. Pellegrini, Professor of Educational Psychology (2002)*

## **Section three: Evaluation Methodology**

### **3.1 Methodology**

In 2006, PlayBoard was awarded a grant from The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation to pilot the Positive PlayGrounds programme in 25 schools over a two year period.

Various methods of evaluation were used throughout this period with the primary objective of measuring the success of the programme and enabling PlayBoard to evaluate how the programme was meeting its aims and objectives. This also allowed PlayBoard to identify areas where improvement or change was needed.

Evaluation Methods used in the pilot evaluation included:

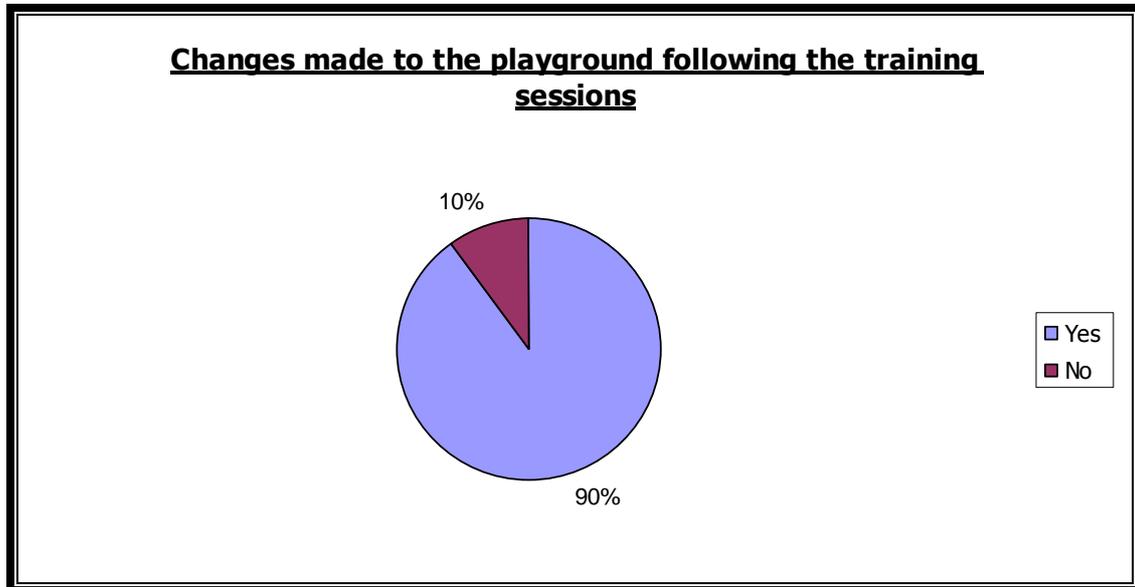
- Training Session Evaluations
- Observations & Photographs
- School Questionnaires & Surveys
- Formal feedback meetings with schools – teachers, playground supervisors and children. Children's Council Meetings.
- Informal Feedback

This study represents a larger sample of schools as it was targeted at all schools who had participated in the 2006/07 school year.

The methodology comprised questionnaire dissemination and focus group activity. Schools were forwarded a formal, but simple and easy to complete, questionnaire which they were asked to complete and return to PlayBoard. PlayBoard also incorporated questions regarding playground markings and time spent in the playground. There was a 67% response rate from 45 schools.

## Section four: Data Analysis

**Q.1 Did you introduce any changes following the training sessions? If so please tell us what:**



90% of the respondents stated that they had made changes to their playgrounds following the Positive Playgrounds Training.

These included:

- More use of the gardens / courtyard
- Introducing new play equipment
- Supervisors introduced games to children
- Loose parts and small toys

*"The facilitator opened up lots of avenues for us. We now have separate small toys, loose parts, dressing up clothes which the children enjoy. The idea of storing them in old suitcases is brilliant, so handy for setting out and the kids tidy up themselves. The new games taught are of great value to the supervisors".*

*"All classes now take out a 'Fun Bag' at lunch time; this contains a variety of things to play with. Use of skipping ropes (either individuals or group skippers) is encouraged. Also children are encouraged to play on the games more natural environment".*

*"Yes, it made us aware as a school that we were not utilising our playground to its full potential. As our training happened towards the end of last year our plans to*

*improve are being implemented this school year. We have set up a playground team who will meet regularly. We plan as a school for functional use of equipment and use of seasonal resources”.*

*“We put a ‘Buddy System’ in place. Children have had fence weaving and tree dressing sessions. We zoned areas of the playground with tyres, children planted flower beds at the top of the playground. Picnic benches have been put in lower playground, more playground markings, new equipment has been purchased and we have been in touch with local conservation group who hopefully will provide us with trees in the near future”.*

*“New supervisor was appointed to supervise unused area around the back of the school. Tennis is not set up and tables for writing/drawing have been assembled in this area which has proved very popular. Seats located under trees as the children enjoy sitting there. We decided on zoning areas which worked better as more space was then available for younger children to play football”.*

**Q.2 Did you explore any of the concepts introduced (loose parts, tree dressing, seating areas, den building etc)? Please tell us...**



50% said yes they had incorporated loose parts into their playground, 23% said they had not and 27% said they plan to in the near future. On exploration some of the 23% wanted to try out other aspects of the programme before adding in loose parts, while a small group felt they could not.

*"Tried everything, some worked, some didn't. Resources we have asked for have all been given or begged. Loose parts are the one thing we have had most success with."*

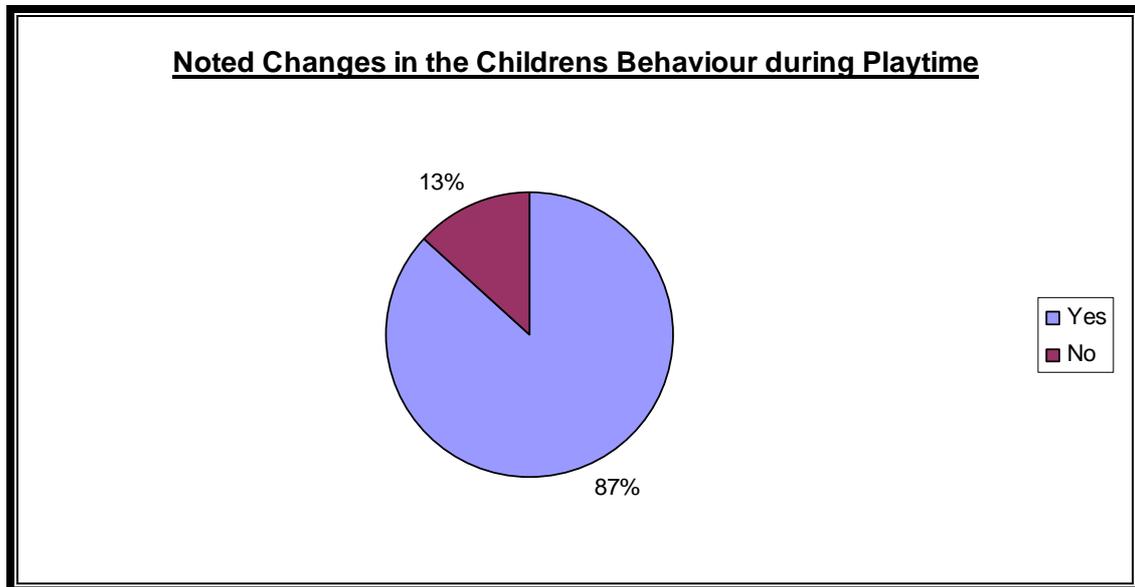
*"Tyres are well used; we need to develop loose parts further e.g. more crates etc. Chalk in playground was very popular short term – could easily be included."*

*"We have fence weaving, disco dancing, singing and cheer leader sticks. Small parts and badminton are the most popular."*

*"We are looking at den building but due to the small nature of the playground are limited."*

*"Loose parts are very important and are a big part of our practice. Maura asked for parents donations of small parts and was very well supported".*

**Q.3 Have you noted any changes in children's behaviour or use of the playground since the training?**



87% of the respondents said there were noticeable changes in children's behaviour in the playground. These were described as positive changes and included things like:

- Less arguing
- Children are co-operating
- Sharing of equipment
- Take part more
- Fewer children standing on the side

*"Because they have more to play with and engage in team games the play time passes so quickly with lots of enjoyment and few problems".*

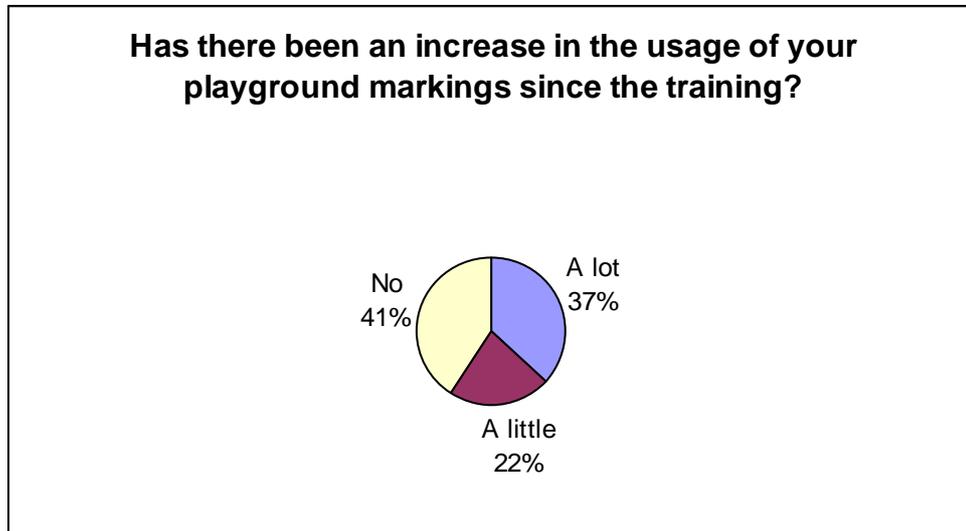
*"Children are outside more and the whole playground is in use. There is less arguing".*

*"They seem more occupied with the equipment. Less disagreements and seem to be sharing the equipment".*

*"Children and supervisors more enthusiastic and latter more involved. Less running into the toilets".*

*"Yes, less discipline problems, happier pupils are productively engaged".*

**Q.4 Has there been any increase in the usage of your playground markings since the training?**



The majority of participants (59%) indicated that there had been an increase in the usage of playground markings since the training. These changes ranged from slight to significant across the schools. However a small number of participants commented that there had no increase in the usage of playground markings.

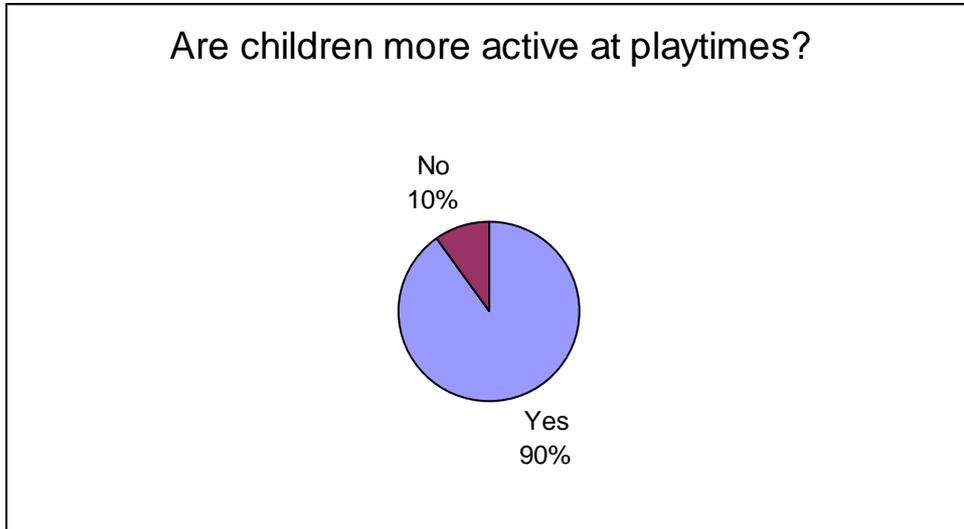
*"The younger children are encouraged to use the markings and they also use them during teaching time. The hopscotch is especially popular".*

*"Markings are used more in the morning than at lunch time, we will soon be upgrading our markings and providing more ways of using them – asking children for suggestions".*

*"The older children can be seen encouraging the younger children to use them".*

*"The school playground is being used fully".*

**Q.5 Are children more physically active as a result of equipment/ resources/ activities provided?**



90% of the respondents said yes children are more physically active at playtimes while 10% said they haven't noticed a change.

*"Not many of our children use the seating area as they are away doing other things – football, tennis, rounder's etc".*

*"Most definitely but for organised games such as hockey / football there is still a gender issue as more boys than girls participate in KS1 and KS2".*

*"As a result of the physical activity here children are getting better physically and mentally".*

*"The activities / equipment we have provided have lead to increased participation and improvement in activities undertaken".*

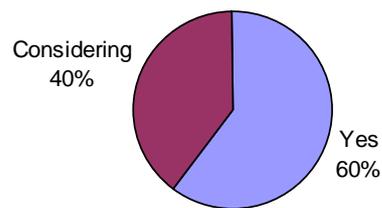
*"Definitely, less standing around or wandering around aimlessly".*

*"More children taking part. No one stands bored as there is something for every child".*

*"Children now have more ideas of how to use the equipment. Children enjoy parachute games".*

**Q.6 Have you developed or are you considering developing a Playground Policy?**

**Have you/are you considering implementing a Playground policy?**



60% of the respondents said they had developed or were in the process of developing a Playground Policy. 40% said they had not, however indicated an intention to address this over the coming year.

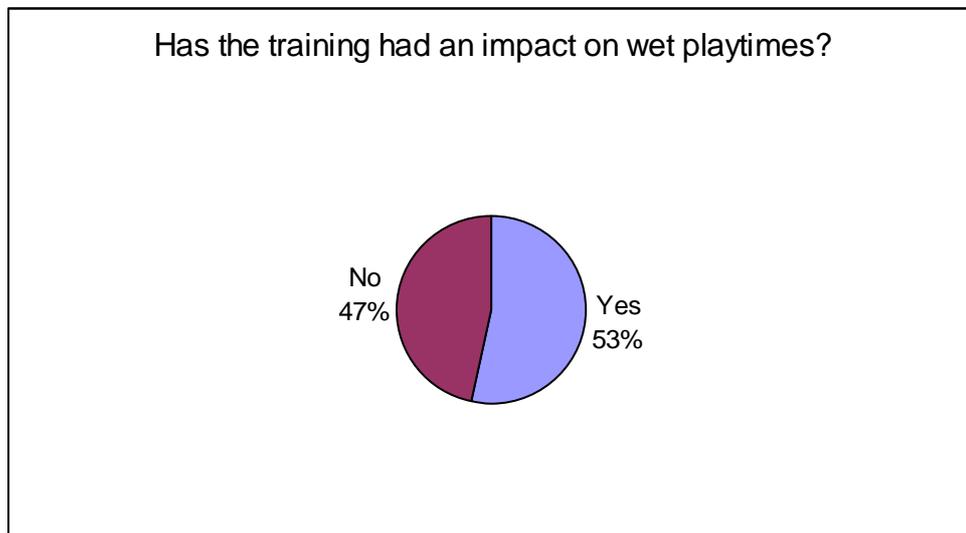
*"We intend to do so as improving the playground has had a big impact on the school day".*

*"We have one in place".*

*"We have a Playground Policy in the development stages".*

*"We have left the policy until this year as we wanted to try things first".*

**Q.7 Has the training had an impact on the management of wet playtimes for the children?**



53% of the respondents said the training had made an impact on the management of wet playtimes, this involved school developing 'wet playtime boxes' or resources for children's use during rainy days. While 47% said they had not changed practice for wet playtimes; some of the reasons included staff ratios and access to appropriate space.

*"Very much so, our new resources have made children active instead of not".*

*"Yes, each class has a 'wet playtime box' in their room".*

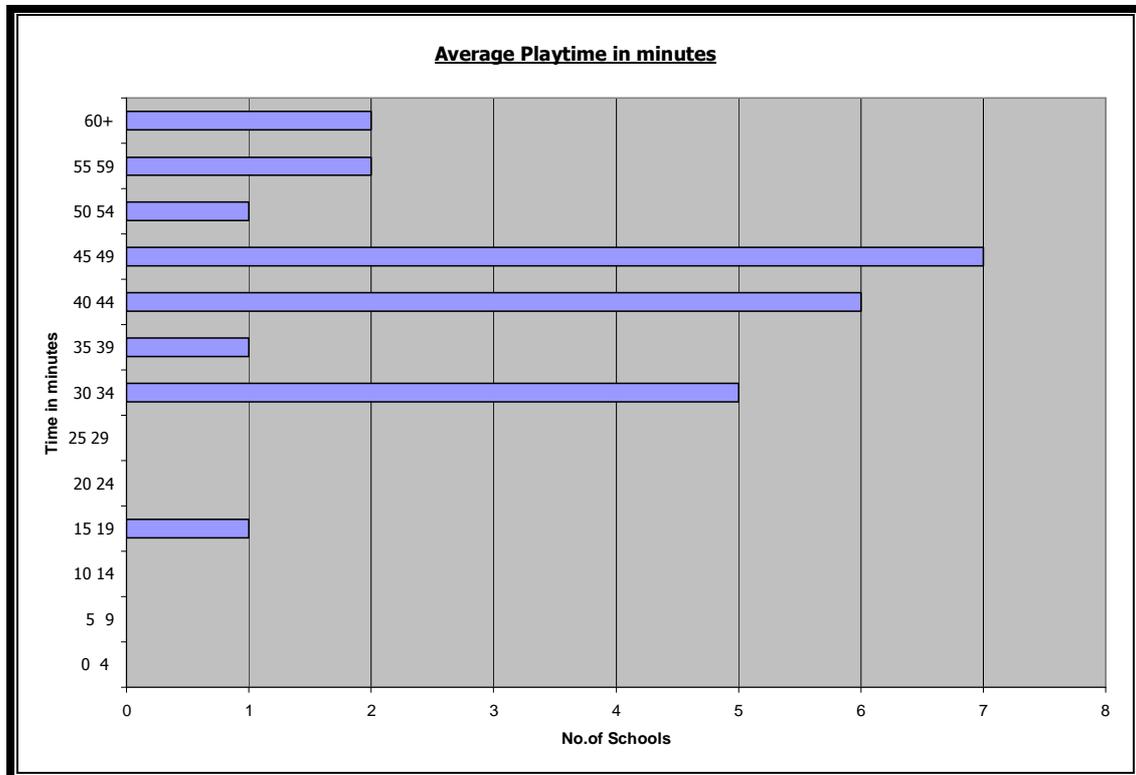
*"Wet playtimes are major problem but now we do games – the X Factor etc and the use of the assembly hall is great".*

*"Children use classroom equipment now, they use whiteboards etc. We also play PlayBoard games and 'thumbs up' etc".*

*"Yes, more resources, managed by pupils – quieter more content at playtimes".*

*"Yes, more ideas for teachers to occupy children during wet playtimes".*

**Q.8 Taking into account morning and lunchtime, approximately how long do the children’s playtimes last?**



The amounts of time children are allocated for play at morning and lunch breaks vary greatly between schools. The results indicate 45 minutes per day (usually 15 mins morning and 30 mins lunch time) was the most common practice within the survey at 28%.

24% said 40 minutes per school day was allocated for play with 20% stating 30 minutes was their practice. At the lower end of the scale the results show only 4% receives 15 mins play per school day while in contrast 8% provide 60mins.

These results show that only 8% of schools in receipt of Positive Playgrounds were meeting the recommended time of one hour per school day for play.

### **Anything else you would like to tell us?**

The schools used this section to tell us about the impact the programme has had on school life. They highlighted the positive benefits for children and staff and increased engagement at lunch and break times. Some stated that attending the training allowed staff to reflect on their practice and consider how to make break and lunch times more enjoyable. Schools enjoyed an opportunity to explore play as a team and develop play strategies together.

Here are some of their comments:

*"Our PlayBoard course was the first training course we all did together, it was absolutely invaluable – we enjoyed it and it has been of great help to us".*

*"Helpful as children are more involved and supervision is much more enjoyable".*

*"Overall the playground has been enhanced since training but still continues to require mentoring thus adapted according to what is working well or not so well. Feel free to come and visit us if you like A, thanks".*

*"Thank you for your help, it has opened our eyes to what was probably a weakness in our school".*

*"The changes we have made have had a very positive effect on the children and the staff supervising the playground. We look forward to our playtimes".*

*"Really enjoyed the programme. Would highly recommend it – thank you".*

## Analysis

Feedback from the participants of the programme indicates that the training has had a significant positive impact in schools.

It is clear to see from the results that the Positive Playgrounds Training initiative has met its original aims to:

- Develop the provision of quality play/learning opportunities in primary school playgrounds.
- Offer training & development opportunities for those adults working in schools.
- Encourage the development of children's social, personal & physical well-being through participation in the programme.

Through supporting playground supervisors in their understanding of play and its benefits to children, the first aim of developing the provision of learning opportunities in primary school playgrounds has been met.

This was evidenced through feedback given on question one where 90% of the respondents claimed that they had made positive changes since participating in the training programme. Changes were extensive, ranging from making better use of the playground to introducing new equipment, games and zoning areas to introducing a buddy system.

One training sessions deals with the importance of introducing loose parts in the playground, e.g. tyres, chalk, crates, den-building materials etc. 77% of schools also stated that they had successfully incorporated, or planned to incorporate loose parts into the playground.

87% of schools reported that there had been noticeable positive changes in the behaviour of children since the training had been implemented. Common descriptions included less arguing, more co-operation, more participation, a reduction in discipline problems and fewer children standing on the side.

The project has met its third aim in terms of encouraging and developing the children's personal, social and physical well being. This has been achieved through the development of a positive play ethos within the school environment.

The importance of playground intervention projects in helping to raise physical activity levels is compelling. 90% of schools said that children were more active after the programme.

The training encouraged the development and implementation of formal strategies to enable children to engage in the process and take responsibility for their playtimes. 60% of the respondents stated they already had developed a Playground Policy. Within this, policy methods for consulting with children would be documented. Even those who had not implemented a play policy intended to do so as they saw that improving the play ground had a positive impact on the school day.

Over half the schools had changed their management of wet playtimes. Many schools had developed wet playtime boxes or other resources. Some schools felt they were unable to change their practice for wet playtimes due to staff ratios and no access to appropriate spaces.

The second aim of Positive PlayGrounds was to offer training and development opportunities for those adults working in schools.

Positive PlayGrounds targets teachers and break-time supervision staff. The formal status of supervision staff within the school community is typically low level. This is reflected in remuneration, training opportunities and the value education authorities have traditionally accorded the break period.

The training offers staff within the school environment training development opportunities and also indirectly offers the participants an opportunity to explore the schools ethos and values in terms of children's play.

It would appear that staff have not only participated in the training but become positively engaged in the development of strategies afterwards to improve playtime opportunities. 90% of respondents reported making changes to the playground following training and 60% had already developed play policies.

The training enables staff to explore this as a team thus encouraging a whole school approach in creating positive attitudes towards children's play. This was reflected by a comment made which stated, "Our PlayBoard course was the first training course we all did together, it was absolutely invaluable – we enjoyed it and it has been of great help to us."

The third aim of the programme was also met. It is well evidenced that children's play can influence physical, emotional and mental well-being. Positive PlayGrounds encouraged the development of children's social, personal & physical well-being through participation in the programme. 90% of schools reported higher levels of physical activity in children. Schools also reported less bullying and fighting. One principal said "Children are getting better physically and mentally."

The results also highlighted the vast difference in practice in relation to the amount of time children are allocated for playtimes on a scale ranging from 15 minutes per day to 60 minutes per day. In terms of activities and resources, adequate time is essential if children are to engage and explore the outdoor environment in the playground.

These results show that only 8% of schools in receipt of Positive Playgrounds were meeting the recommended time of one hour per school day for play.

**“Everything the child learns is acquired by his own observation, by his own experience.” (Pestalozzi)**

## **Section five: Conclusions**

### **Conclusions**

Positive PlayGrounds was developed based on an identified need. Evidence had shown that outdoor spontaneous play has decreased significantly over the past two decades, correspondently; childhood obesity, anti-social behaviour and poor social skills have increased.

Playgrounds are an important vehicle for promoting and developing play, especially for the significant proportion of children who *never* play outdoors and for those without adequate play provision close to their homes.

The Esmee Fairbairn grant in 2006/07 enabled PlayBoard to research, develop and pilot a project with 25 schools. The result was the successful training package of “Positive Playgrounds.”

The six session programme, with an optional additional participatory session, has met all of its aims and objectives in full and has been very successful with much positive feedback.

Positive PlayGrounds appears to have enhanced school life for all involved. It is clear to see that this project has been of benefit to the school playground supervisory workforce. Creating a highly motivated and enthusiastic workforce has ultimately benefited the children in terms of extending play opportunities, activities and environments. Teachers have less behavioural difficulties to deal with and children are fitter, more relaxed and eager to learn in the formal classroom.

There does still appear to be issues in the playground however, especially with regards to supervisors' training opportunities, time spent in the playground, the use of playground markings and funding.

With schools adopting a play-based approach, and empirical evidence pointing to the importance of play in the holistic development of children, it is vital that the school playground is an area which is invested in. This report therefore has 5 key recommendations.

## **Section six: Recommendations**

### **Recommendations**

1. All schools in Northern Ireland would benefit from having access to the Positive PlayGrounds programme. Funds should be allocated for training in the playground.
2. Children should have substantial morning and lunchtime breaks. Current playtime allocation within some schools is not adequate.
3. Those employed within schools to 'supervise' during playtimes should be adequately supported within the school, properly qualified and have access to ongoing training.
4. Ratios of adult/children caused concern within many schools and were a barrier to play. Lunch and break times should be adequately resourced with staff to ensure that children can access play in the playground and space is being utilised fully.
5. While results did show increased usage of playground markings, it is not clear that it was a direct result of the actual markings or the increase in physical activity in the playground. PlayBoard recommends investment into changeable structures and materials, such as loose parts, which enhance children's engagement of play environments.

# APPENDICES

## **Appendix One – PlayBoard Information**

### **PlayBoard**

PlayBoard is the lead agency for the development of children and young people's play in Northern Ireland. The organisation is underpinned by the United Convention on the Rights of the Child in particular Article 31 the child's right to play.

Since its inception in 1985, PlayBoard has campaigned, lobbied, raised awareness and developed relationships in order to put play on the agenda of policy makers and resource providers.

As the leading play agency, PlayBoard can ensure the breadth and complexity of play in health, education and social and economic development at both local and regional levels is addressed for all age groups.

### **Organisational vision and mission**

#### Vision

A society that respects and values the child's right to play as an intrinsic and essential right of childhood; where play is recognised and embraced as being the most natural way to enhance children's health and well-being.

#### Mission

We work for the child's right to play.

## **Organisational Activity**

PlayBoard works at a number of levels and is comprehensive in its activities.

### *National and International Profile*

The agency works in partnership with many stakeholders to advance understanding and realisation of play. PlayBoard represents Northern Ireland on a number of national and international bodies including PETC.UK, the four Nation Children's Play Policy Forum and the International Play Association.

PlayBoard, in partnership with OFMDFM, hosted the inaugural 5 national play summit meeting in Stormont in September 2007.

PlayBoard were delighted to be invited to represent the children's sector in Northern Ireland at the high-profile Smithsonian Festival in Washington in June 2007.

PlayBoard represented Play in NI at the International Play Association's triennial conference in Hong Kong in January 2008.

### *Intermediary Funding Body*

To date PlayBoard has disseminated in excess of £25 million pounds to community groups acting on behalf of Peace, Big Lottery and DHSSPS.

### *Membership*

PlayBoard's membership exceeds 300 and includes play organisations, after-school clubs, individuals, statutory bodies, local councils, learning providers and students.

### *Consultancy Work*

- Development of Ards Borough Council Play Strategy
- Development of Newtownabbey Borough Council Play Policy
- Inter-departmental working on the Play Policy Consultation Document
- Play Inclusion project in Western Health and Social Services Board

### Training

PlayBoard has a comprehensive training suite and play-specific resources which tackle issues including:

- Introduction to Play
- Games Not Names (anti-sectarian)
- Addressing Disability
- Diversity in Play
- Business Planning
- Programme Planning
- Recruitment and Selection
- Staff Appraisals
- Quality Assurance
- Child Protection
- Tailored programmes
- Fit for Play

### Partnership working

In pursuit of the Agency's aims and objectives, we have worked in partnership with a number of organisations and strategic partners including:

- Northern Ireland Forum for Youth
- YouthNet - Big Deal Award Partner
- Dept of Education -Extended Schools Project Boards
- Regional Early Years Strategy
- Childcare Partnerships
- Investing for Health
- Skills Active
- DHSSPS
- Health Board Physical Activity Groups
- Health Promotion Agency
- NICCY
- Early Years
- NICMA
- Children In NI
- Include Youth
- Spring Board
- Local councils
- OFMDFM

## **Appendix Two - Positive PlayGrounds Evaluation Questionnaire**

- 1.** Did you introduce any changes following the training session?  
If so, please tell us what.
  
- 2.** Did you explore any of the concepts introduced (loose parts, tree dressing, seating areas, den building etc)? Please tell us.....
  
- 3.** Have you noted any changes in children's behaviour or use of the playground since the training?
  
- 4.** Has there been any increase in the usage of your playground markings since the training?
  
- 5.** Are children more physically active as a result of equipment / resources / activities provided?
  
- 6.** Have you developed or are you considering developing a Playground Policy?
  
- 7.** Has the training had an impact on the management of wet playtimes for the children?
  
- 8.** Taking into account morning and lunchtime, approximately how long do the children's playtimes last?
  
- 9.** Anything else you would like to tell us?



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