

# Active Play

FOR ATTAINMENT

INSPIRING

SCOTLAND

*thrive*  
**Outdoors**

Supporting Scotland's children to grow, play & learn outdoors









# Contents

<b>About Active Play</b>	<b>02</b>
<b>Why Active Play?</b>	<b>04</b>
<b>How Active Play Works</b>	<b>06</b>
<b>Active Play is the Future</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>Our Evidence &amp; Further Reading</b>	<b>09</b>

# Active Play

**Active Play promotes greater physical activity for Scotland's children in a way that is fun, inclusive and active. It contributes directly to Curriculum for Excellence outcomes in health and wellbeing.**

Research has shown that active children learn better and are more likely to have happier and healthier lives.

Active Play runs for a minimum of 10 weeks and is targeted at a whole Primary 3 or 4 class and helps improve physical activity levels during school as well as supporting pupils emotional, social and cognitive development.

It is a combination of semi-structured games and unstructured play, delivered outdoors by local play specialists and supported by the class teacher.

Active Play develops fundamental movement skills, such as coordination and balance, and engenders the confidence and motivation to play more and be more physically active. Active Play also builds positive relationships between the children and their teachers, with improved relations leading to better classroom behaviour and supporting better learning.

Research from around the world demonstrates a link between physical activity and enhanced learning, meaning Active Play helps to close the attainment gap<sup>1</sup>.

At the end of the programme teachers have the ability and resources to continue Active Play with the use of our online resource, toolkits, videos and additional training.

Active Play was pioneered by play charity PEEK and developed for schools by Inspiring Scotland in partnership with play charities, academics and sector specialists. We have delivered Active Play across six local authorities, supporting thousands of children to be more active since 2014. Our teacher feedback, academic research and independent evaluation prove Active Play works.



**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 Evidence for Active Play is robust

Our evidence and research shows:

- Sedentary behaviour in school is reduced while participating in Active Play;
- Active time in the school day is increased while participating in Active Play;
- 86% of children taking part said they liked doing physical activities more than they used to following Active Play;
- 95% had fun at Active Play;
- 92% of children play more outside of school following Active Play;
- Teachers report children being more attentive and engaged in class following Active Play.

Inspiring Scotland runs Active Play for Glasgow City Council as part of its Improvement Challenge. Working across 138 Primary Schools over three years, this collaboration involves local charities, a specialist CPD and training provider and university researchers.

'Virtuous cycle' identified by educational and physiological research



Key outcomes from Glasgow Active Play collaboration:

- Increased physical activity levels and improved fundamental movement skills;
- Children have developed confidence and self esteem;
- Pupils are more attentive in class;
- Teachers report improved problem solving and creative thinking;
- Active Play encourages good behaviour with pupils responding positively to Active Play as an incentive;
- Schools have embraced play as a means of closing the attainment gap.



**Play is the foundation of a healthy, happy future for all of us, which is why we want to make play a fundamental part of growing up in Scotland.**

- Celia Tennant, Chief Executive , Inspiring Scotland

# Why Active Play?

## Children need to play.

Play is recognised as a child's fundamental right in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As a nation, our government and academia now acknowledge the developmental benefits of engaging in play throughout childhood.

There are health issues related to low physical activity which have serious implications for our children.



Of six-year-olds spend more than 3 hours a day in front of screen.  
For some it can be much longer.

Growing Up in Scotland 2014



Of children in Scotland don't meet the minimum daily guidelines for physical activity. The minimum is just 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity

Scottish Health Survey 2016



Of children in Scotland are at risk of being overweight or obese.

Scottish Health Survey 2016



Of seven-year-olds in Scotland have low social and emotional wellbeing.

Growing Up in Scotland 2014

Inactive children are more likely to develop diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, asthma, arthritis, bone fractures and suffer from poor mental health.

Low physical activity is a problem across demographics but these health issues can contribute to widening the attainment gap for poorer children.

Schools can, and do, address these challenges but more needs to be done. Active Play is proven to increase a child's physical activity in a way which is fun and inclusive. It gives teachers the skillset to improve health and wellbeing and connect with their pupils through play.



# 10-13

**months is the attainment gap between children from low- and high-income families at aged 5.**

Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Education, JRF, 2014



# £94m

**The annual cost to the NHS in Scotland of physical inactivity**

Costing the Burden of Ill Health Related to Physical Inactivity in Scotland 2013

**Before Active Play the children did not know how to play, they were often sedentary in the playground and this often led to children arguing or not engaging with each other.**

- Headteacher, Sandwood Primary in Glasgow

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

- Headteacher, Royston Primary in Glasgow

**His face lights up when it's Active Play time. I can't believe it, I really struggle with getting him to take part in gym and when he does he seems to hate it.**

- Class Teacher, Parkview Primary in Glasgow



# How Active Play works

**Active Play is simple. It boosts physical activity in children and helps them to learn and develop skills through playing physically active games and taking part in unstructured play outside.**

Active Play is not just a nice idea. By boosting physical activity, Active Play boosts children's development and contributes to raising attainment.

Our own research is backed up by studies from 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.

Studies have linked regular physical activity to improved cognitive ability, with aerobic exercise particularly linked to improved mental control including executing complex tasks and better memory function<sup>2</sup>. A separate study concluded there was a long-term positive impact of moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) on academic attainment<sup>3</sup>.

Led by the play worker, a Primary 3 or Primary 4 class take part in a weekly one hour session which combines semi-structured games and activities and unstructured child-led play.

The games have been designed to help the pupils gain fundamental skills like running, jumping, throwing, catching as well as raising their levels of MVPA.

## The 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

**Active Play has helped me to engage reluctant learners and helped them become more involved in class lessons.**

- Class Teacher, Golfhill Primary in Glasgow

**The pupils are better at listening and following instructions. They are better at winning and losing than before and better at working in teams.**

- Support for Learning Worker, Blackfriars Primary in Glasgow



The games also help children build important skills and attributes such as confidence, teamwork, risk assessment, problem solving and emotional resilience.

After five weeks of delivery, the class teacher is encouraged to take a lead in the sessions, supported by the Play worker.

Led by Inspiring Scotland, our partners work as a team with each member having clearly defined roles:

- Inspiring Scotland’s Performance Advisor provides leadership, coordination, programme evaluation, charity selection, contract management and partner support.



### Skills, identified by class teachers, developed through Active Play



- Our Partner, Agile, manages the induction with schools and provides the charities with CPD to deliver quality Active Play sessions. Agile has also developed our excellent online resource [www.activeplay.org.uk](http://www.activeplay.org.uk) which provides teachers with additional tools for delivery.
- Our charity partners are trusted local community-based charities, PEEK, Jeely Piece Club and FARE in Glasgow, Smart Play Network in Dundee and CALA in Highland. The play workers have an invaluable insight into the needs of our young people. They act as trusted ambassadors and enthusiastic role models, confident in working in schools and communities and with families and children.
- Our academic partners bring a further layer of expert support to the partnership. In Glasgow, we work closely with University of Strathclyde Department of Physical Activity and Health.
- We are supported and funded in Glasgow by Glasgow City Council’s Education team who select the schools and provide wraparound support to boost physical literacy through their PREPASS team.

# Active Play is the future – join us

**A successful educational system is fundamental to a successful future; for our children, our communities and for Scotland. We believe in the power of outdoor play to improve the life chances of Scotland's children.**

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. Active Play is proven to be effective in supporting children's health and wellbeing and their cognitive and emotional development. It is easy and inexpensive to implement and comes perfectly naturally to every child. It is something all children think is fun and want to do.

**We want to make Active Play a fundamental part of the school day in Scotland.**

**Do you?**

**Join our play revolution.**

**Email [enquiries@inspiringscotland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@inspiringscotland.org.uk) or call Inspiring Scotland on 0131 442 8760**

**Twitter: @Thrive\_Outdoors**

**Facebook: @ThriveOutdoorsScot**

Active Play is run by Inspiring Scotland's Thrive Outdoors team. Pioneered by Glasgow charity PEEK and then developed by Inspiring Scotland and Agile in 2014. It was then expanded into four local authority areas and researched by the University of Strathclyde. In 2016, Inspiring Scotland partnered with Glasgow City Council Education Services to bring Active Play to primary schools across the city as part of the Attainment Challenge. In 2017, we extended the programme to Dundee and the Highlands. We want every child in Scotland to have the same opportunity to lead a healthy and happy life and are committed to providing more children with the opportunity to play actively.



## Our Evidence & Further Reading

Active Play

<https://activeplay.org.uk/>

Active Play Evaluation report April 2016, Arrivo Consulting

<https://bit.ly/2GOWaDh>

Evaluation of Go2play Active Play programme in Glasgow 2016, Blake Stevenson

<https://bit.ly/2H6SGMD>

UK Chief Medical Officers' Guidelines 2011 Start Active, Stay Active

[www.bit.ly/startactive](http://www.bit.ly/startactive)

The challenge of childhood obesity, British Heart Foundation

<https://bit.ly/2LralSu>

Active Healthy Kids Scotland Scorecard

[www.activehealthykidsscotland.co.uk](http://www.activehealthykidsscotland.co.uk)

Scottish Government Healthy Eating, Active Living Strategy 2018

<https://bit.ly/2sbrjvz>

The Scottish Health Survey

<https://bit.ly/2cUVA8q>

### References

<sup>1</sup> Johnstone (2016). *Active play, physical activity and fundamental movement skills literature review*. University of Strathclyde

<sup>2</sup> Guiney & Machado (2013). *Benefits of regular aerobic exercise for executive functioning in healthy populations*. National Center for Biotechnology Information

<sup>3</sup> Booth et al (2013). *Associations between objectively measured physical activity and academic attainment in adolescents from a UK cohort*. British Medical Journal



# INSPIRING SCOTLAND

Registered Office:

Riverside House, 502 Gorgie Road,  
Edinburgh, EH11 3AF

T. 0131 442 8760

E. [enquiries@inspiringscotland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@inspiringscotland.org.uk)

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

A company limited by guarantee registered in Scotland, No. SC342436,  
and a registered Scottish charity, No. SC039605.