

## When given many opportunities to play, children learn:

Intellectual – problem solving, predicting, questioning, wondering, making connections, evaluating, planning, understanding symbol, imagining, remembering, reflecting

Dispositions – curiosity, communication, persistence, confidence, self-control, co-operation

Social/Emotional – conflict resolution, negotiation, language, sense of satisfaction and achievement, resilience

Physical – balance, core strength, fine motor control (cutting, drawing, threading), gross motor (jumping, climbing, throwing)

Academic – language development, using numeracy in real life (weighing, measuring), literacy (drawing, writing, reading, using symbols in pretend play)



## What can happen when children don't play enough?

### Self-regulation does not develop

The ability to control and regulate your thoughts and actions is critical for successful learning and wellbeing. When children only have adult-directed experiences, it is very difficult for self-regulation to develop.

### Resilience does not develop

Having the persistence and self-awareness to cope with life's difficulties begins in early childhood when children naturally navigate difficulties in their play – with others or with a task they have set themselves.

### Imagination and Creativity don't develop

These are not just fun things for the Arts and Drama. The ability to imagine is needed so we can plan and create new opportunities and set goals. Creative thinking is what will set learners apart in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

This is not an exhaustive list of all the benefits of living and learning playfully. There are many websites and blogs devoted to this topic that are worth exploring.

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# Play

Why is it essential in children's lives?

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# Play creates the building blocks for living

Playing is at the root of everything it is to be human – from building relationships, feeling good about yourself and about life, to having the literacy and numeracy skills to live a full and rewarding life. Humans have always played. It is how evolution makes sure we learn the things we need to survive as a species – we play to practice the things we will do when we are older, we play in pretend worlds that help us to imagine a new future, we play to develop motor skills, thinking skills and habits of mind (dispositions) that enable our species to survive and to thrive. Time to play is important at home and at school. More and more schools today understand and use the power of play to engage children in learning and to develop a strong sense of wellbeing.



*What do you remember playing as a child?*

*What are the common characteristics of your play?*

You most probably remember lots of fun times with friends, making, building, pretending and being ‘in control’ of the play.

These experiences share the characteristics of having a sense of freedom, children making a lot of the decisions (within boundaries set by the adults), active, maybe messy, uninterrupted time to play and a sense that time flew because you’re so involved.

We know that these characteristics – playfulness – create opportunities for children to be deeply involved. All their senses are alive. The brain sparks with new connections as we play. It makes sense to create opportunities for children to learn in this way because we know that more learning, deeper learning and more long-lasting learning will happen with this total involvement. Education talks about this in terms of intellectual quality or cognitive load – how much ‘brain-power’ or thinking does an activity require?

Education has more than one goal: we are concerned with the **WHOLE CHILD** and teachers plan for:

**Intellectual goals** – the kinds of thinking that help to learn and live successfully

**Dispositional goals** – the kinds of ‘habits of

mind’ that help to drive deep learning (like curiosity, persistence, openness, communication)

**Social/Emotional goals** – the wellbeing and sense of self and others that promote full active lives and positive relationships

**Physical goals** – the kinds of skills and development that support living and learning

**Academic (or Scholastic) goals** – the kinds of knowledge and skills that help children learn in school.

*Academic learning depends on a foundation of intellectual, dispositional, social/emotional and physical learning.*  
*Academic goals that are learnt and remembered for the long term are hard to achieve without the other kinds of learning first being strong.*