

Topic: An exploration into how children's perceptions of play and playfulness is deeply embedded in the Welsh and English curriculum.

Section 1 – Literature Review:

Play is at the heart of the Welsh Government's (WG) international policy and in the rollout of the New Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2022). Arguably, Wales was one of the first countries in the UK to make steadfast commitments to work alongside with the United Nations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child set (UNCRC) in 2004 (Sarah Te One, 2011). There has been a significant emphasis in giving children the provision they need to have a 'flying start in life', and a 'comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities' through playful activities (Stewart, MacDonald and Waters-Davies, 2024). The Welsh Government made it clear that play is a necessary component of the non-maintained curriculum, in the sense that it allows children to become self-aware of their environment through which they are being taught in, acquire new social rules, as well as being 'fundamental to intellectual development' (Wainright *et al.*, 2019). However, there is a substantial concern that the implementation of play-based pedagogy in Wales is not as effective and consistently delivered to students as it should be. Only one in five school settings across the whole country were achieving effective development of play activity through professional development (Kingston and Siraj-Blatchford, 2017). For this reason, it seems appropriate that teachers may want to provide children the opportunity to practice their play-based skills, in equipping them with the tools required to become capable citizens in life ready to navigate with the world around them. This idea aligns with Prout's belief that children should be seen as a being, rather than becoming in their playful activities (Prout, 2005; cited by Stewart, MacDonald and Waters-Janes, 2024).

Children's understanding of play and play-based pedagogy is different across Wales and England. For example, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a child-centered framework in England that sets the standards for growth, learning progression and safety for each child from birth to five years old (UK Government, n.d.). Whereas, children in Wales from ages three to sixteen follow the New Curriculum for Wales, that is designed to give a continuum of learning attainment with all learners nurturing and excelling in their own ways, to achieve greatest potential as evidenced in the four purposes of the curriculum. An effective child-play pedagogy, that is deeply rooted and embedded in strong relationships, is key in achieving the ambitious plan of this curriculum (Welsh Government, 2024). One of the underlying rationales of this topic is to explore teacher's and children's perceptions of play in two non-maintained schools across England and Wales, and to assess the extent to which schools have got access to open-ended or structured

materials as part of their curriculum requirements. An exploratory case study will be used in these two contexts (Atkinson *et al.*, 2020). Within their observations, two schools from England and Wales were chosen “opportunistically.” The study purely focussed on Key Stage 1, given how broad the curriculum is for a wide range of cohorts. One of the methods that the researchers employed was to use the Mosaic approach, whereby it was the children that guided the visitors around the school environment. Children were presented with the opportunity to showcase their knowledge of play-based pedagogy in school, by answering mixed questions like ‘where they play’ and ‘what they do’ during their free time. The findings confirm that student’s perceptions of play across the two schools in England and Wales were positive, in general. Whilst Welsh students were able to better elaborate upon their thoughts for activities, such as: ‘we like doing playdough and the house toys’, or ‘we do challenges, we do a lot of stuff,’ English students also exemplified an innate desire to use the words ‘play’ or ‘work’ when referring to their activity. This term was coined more frequently by students from Reception than the other year groups. Nonetheless, teachers who can implement play-based pedagogy into their curriculum, are likely to create an environment for students that is conducive towards success and productivity in the long term, thus allowing them to better explore and navigate the world independently (Play for Wales, 2024).

On the other hand, children’s perceptions of play and playfulness in education is clearly emphasised in Vygotsky’s work. According to Vygotsky (1978, cited by Siraj-Blatchford, 2009), the educator has a responsibility to ensure that the child has enough support and provision in their learning within their ‘zone of proximal development.’ He also posits the view that teaching should always be tailored to the student’s emerging skills, not at their existing ones (Bodrova, and Leong, 2007; cited by Siraj-Blatchford, 2009). This is where play comes into context, and it is seen as one of the most fundamental parts of the child’s holistic development. To have a better understanding of what ‘play’ and ‘playfulness’ means in the context of curriculum progression in the Early Years Education, an exploratory case study will be used to analyse whether children have a right to play from a sample size of sixteen students and two teachers (Goodhall and Atkinson, 2021). A Leuven scale was adapted to the purpose of these two schools. For example, if a student has shown any signs of satisfaction, though not always present with the same amount of consistency and intensity, then they will achieve level five. This means that the student has engaged in the activity without any interruption or was able to display certain level of motivation in their tasks (Leavers, 1994, cited by Goodhall and Atkinson, 2021). The observations show that in the English classrooms, the activities were predominately placed and controlled by the teachers themselves, whereas in the Welsh schools, there was a greater level of movements across the continua.

Children were confident and adept in their ability to develop and plan activities for a sustained period of time in play, especially when they were playing during their outdoor break time. The teachers in the sample believe that play is an intrinsic part of the curriculum and that it effectively allows children to enthuse in the learning process from the onset of their learning progression. However, one must not forget that the schools selected in this sampling frame are not representative of the mainstream curriculum within Wales and England. They do not give us a coherent pedagogical understanding of the play-based activities that other schools may wish to pursue in their curriculum frameworks (cited by Steward, MacDonald, and Waters-Janes, 2024). Also, the WG emphasised in their annual report that the New Curriculum for Wales is well implemented by schools, demonstrating an effective cycle of review and continued improvement (WG, 2024). Nonetheless, the long-term implications may need to be seen, to see if children's perceptions of 'play' and 'playfulness' will be still long-lasting in their future.

The purpose of this essay is to analyse whether children's perceptions of 'play' and 'playfulness' are being embedded in classrooms within the English and Welsh settings. A mixed methods approach will be used to identify whether opportunities for child-led play activities for children are being championed by teachers and professionals in this environment. The methodology section will seek to consider if effective pedagogy, that is rooted in the context of 'play' and 'playfulness', is epitomised in the New Curriculum for Wales.

Section 2 – Methodological Considerations

Within the Early Years Curriculum, a research method refers to the types of strategies, techniques and processes that the researcher may wish to utilise in order to collect information on a certain topic, should they want to have a much better understanding of in the future (University of Newcastle, 2024). These methods can be broken down into three sections, which are either qualitative or quantitative research, and a mixed method analysis. On the one hand, qualitative research seeks to gather people's opinions about their past experiences, emotions or complex behaviours; in aiding our own understanding of the world through which we live in (Jarive, 2024). On the other hand, quantitative research relies on collecting fundamental statistical data to test theories, identify relationships between two or more variables and reflect sample data for the wider population. This type of research uses observations and surveys to gather insights about the topic that the researcher is pursuing in their studies (Greig, Taylor and MacKay, 2013). However, as Jarive (2024) has clearly pointed out, there is no contrast between quantitative and qualitative research, as both will complement each other to provide significant information when conducting the study. For the main purpose of this essay, a mixed

methods approach will be used to analyse whether children's perceptions of 'play' and 'playfulness' are deemed positive in the Welsh and English curriculum, primarily through non-maintained and maintained school settings (WG, 2022).

As part of this study, an opportunity sampling will be used to explore children's perceptions about 'play' and 'playfulness' through two maintained school settings in the Welsh and English curriculum (Goodhall and Atkinson, 2020). The primary advantage of using this type of sampling technique is that it is easy to access the data collection without it being too cost-effective. This means that the researcher is able to obtain its results swiftly without any concerns. Although, one of the major flaws with using this sampling technique is that there is a high risk of selection bias since the researcher may unconsciously choose participants they are more comfortable with. The results may not be well generalised across the population because of poor external validity (Ahmed, 2024). Within this methodology, two state schools in England and Wales were selected opportunistically - firstly, a school from North-East Wales that was involved in the Play for Wales scheme, and secondly a school from the North-West England was also invited to take part in this participatory research by other major institutions (Payler *et al.*, 2017; cited by Goodhall and Atkinson, 2020). Due to the exploratory nature of this study, a focus group study will be conducted to analyse children's behaviours and perceptions of playfulness in curriculum progression. Each focus group will have several children and a researcher. Children will sit on the floor, ensuring that the environment they are working in is calm, and informative, which will effectively allow them to engage in these stimulating activities through the use of playful pedagogy that they are being presented with during that time (Howard 2002, cited by Goodhall and Atkinson, 2020). Overall, children's understanding of 'play' is strong, positing the view that it is seen as fun, enjoyable, and child-led activity. Children see play as a good learning experience, alongside with other peers and friends in the environment. This is similar to Piaget's (1932, cited by Balladares *et al.*, 2025) belief that play is one of the fundamental components of child development. They progressively integrate more complex skills – such as saying 'I think playing is sharing and being kind' (England) and 'playing tag and running round with your friends' (Wales) (Goodhall, and Atkinson, 2020) - to develop more rules in their play-based activity. Throughout this study, children from the two non-maintained schools across Wales and England demonstrated a clear understanding of play-based activities, and expressed their own views on how they would define, classify and apply play in their learning environment on a daily basis.

However, when measuring the extent to which the implementation of a play-based pedagogy for children is effective in the English and Welsh curriculum, most researchers tend to use observations and interviews as part of their data collection

methods (Sevon, Mustola, Siippainen, and Vlasov, 2025). According to the Welsh Government (WG, 2022), observations play an important role in practice. It helps us understand what 'motivates, inspires and engages' young children. Effective observations are crucial to understanding the needs and wants of each child in their academic progression. This should act as a catalyst for professionals to make thoughtful plans for their future learning experiences. Similarly, according to Nolan, Macfarlane and Cartmel (2013), interviews is one of the most reliable types of qualitative research in practice, because it gives children and professionals a strong sense of trust and confidentiality amongst the researchers. Establishing a good rapport with the participants is nonetheless a key skill required to ensure the smooth transition of this process, and doing so establishes a relationship that builds on respect, trust and integrity (Gerson and Horowitz, 2002, cited by Nolan, Macfarlane and Cartmel, 2013). One of the most common types of interviews that is used to communicate directly with children is a conversational interview, which will capture the feelings, thoughts and behaviours of the participant's own experiences. A Leuven's Involvement Scale will be adapted to the purpose of this study; to evaluate the extent to which children's perceptions of 'play' and 'playfulness' are fully emphasised in their wellbeing and involvement criteria (Leavers, 1994; cited by Goodhall and Atkinson, 2021). Observations will take place throughout the course of this time, alongside with effective curriculum delivery and implementation. The activities that were observed were mostly dictated by children and the environment through which they were being surrounded with. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were proposed by teachers to explore how their understanding of play is presented in the classroom environment for young children, and in the wider framework of the curriculum (WG, 2019). The findings have shown that play-based opportunities for children in the English classroom appear limited, because of expectations of the curriculum and space constraints. There seems to be a great dichotomy between 'play' and 'work', with 'play' being perceived as something that takes place beyond the confines of the classroom environment (Goodhall and Atkinson, 2019). On the other hand, a wide range of activities were promoted in the Welsh classrooms, with 'tasks situated alongside a work-play continuum'. Children were engaged in child and adult-like initiated literacy activity, making thoughtful choices over their 'activity, materials, and course of event,' in reaching high levels of autonomy (Howard and McInnes, 2012). Sustaining high-quality play provision is at the heart of the rollout of the New Curriculum for Wales (WG, 2022). These observations confirm that Welsh schools generally advocate for children's rights to play, as it is heavily emphasised in article 31 of the UNCRC, than their English school counterparts (Play for Wales, 2022). Further research on a wider scale, such as having a greater sample size of schools, could potentially give us a clear insight into the effectiveness of the implementation of the Welsh and English curriculum, in

enabling children to develop their 'play' and 'playfulness' skills that is necessary for their future endeavours.

Lastly, the Halo effect is a cognitive bias where a first impression in one area influences subsequent judgements about other unrelated areas. According to Lee *et al.* (2020), the empirical evidence underlying the halo effect has been present in many spheres of our social life. The main characteristics of a halo effect is that it is quite intuitive, widespread, and constant. However, the Hawthorne effect occurs when there is a sudden change in the person's or a subject's normal behaviour, since they realise that their behaviour is being observed, watched and analysed (Oswald, Sherratt, and Smith, 2014). The Hawthorne effect can invalidate the results of the research by introducing other factors that experimenters were unaware whilst conducting the research. Neither the Halo effect nor the Hawthorne effect will be used to explore how children's perceptions of 'play' and 'playfulness' are embedded in the Welsh and English curriculum for several reasons. Both methods can create distortions in the sample data that will weaken our own understanding of how children's knowledge of play and play-based activities are being presented in the school classrooms, as part of the curriculum expectations, most notably during their time at Key Stage One (GOV.UK, 2024). To avoid this issue, a specific type of technique, known as the triangulation process, will be used to supersede the other two social phenomena. According to the Open University (2021), triangulation refers to studying a specific type of topic from different perspectives by using a range of research approaches and sources of data. To a certain extent, triangulation is synonymous with the use of a mixed methods approach, as it combines elements of both qualitative and quantitative analysis by employing a wide range of data collection methods such as interviews, observations and focus groups (Burns, 2000; cited by Open University, 2021). For this reason, it seems appropriate that triangulation is adapted to the purpose of this methodology, since it will collate exploratory data and cooperative data to give a better understanding of how children might depict 'play,' and 'playfulness' in Welsh, and English maintained settings in their curriculum frameworks and pedagogy (WG, 2024; GOV.UK, 2024).

Section 3 – Ethical implications

Informed consent is one of the most fundamental aspects of research ethics. This occurs when an educational researcher gives human participants the opportunity to operate in an environment where they are treated with respect, integrity, and sensitivity (UWTSD, 2022). According to the University of Oxford (2021), consent should take place before the participant is undertaking the research, without any sort of external pressure or coercion taking place. Additionally, the minimum sort of requirements for consent to be informed is when the participant fully understands the

purpose of this research and what constitutes a valid agreement to this project. However, the relative importance of informed consent cannot be undermined in the Early Years Curriculum. According to BERA (2024), researchers have got a huge responsibility in considering how they should engage with participants, such as young children, at the expense of their research; for example, by 'debriefing them in an audience-friendly format' or creating a non-informative environment that is conducive towards peace, calmness and independence. Similarly, children are also placed at the forefront of the study, expressing their own views of 'play' and 'playfulness' in their research across two different maintained schools in the Welsh and England curriculum (Newell, Anne-Graham, and Fitzgerald, 2011). To gain understanding of how children's perceptions of 'play' and 'playfulness' are presented in the curriculum across Wales and England, an informed consent was gained from the parents of children of Key Stage One through letters and information sheets. Should children not feel quite comfortable or confident about their involvement in the sample size, then they could be withdrawn from the research at any time (Goodhall and Atkinson, 2020). This is to ensure that children's confidentiality and rights are being protected and exercised in their ethical research. In most cases, when conducting research, it is crucial that children should be informed of this right and have the right to withdraw from the research if they feel under pressure, as a request compliance (BERA, 2024).

An information sheet, also known as the Participant Information Sheet (PIC), is a type of document that establishes the necessary knowledge and information that the participants are required to know for the motivation and pursuit of this study, in giving them informed consent (University of Cambridge, 2022). According to Truscott (2024), an information sheet should be a clear and succinct document, that outlines the nature and purpose of this study; the procedures, risks, or benefits underlying this research; and the right to withdraw. The length and the design of this document should be simplistic and not quite detailed, thus encouraging participants to read it in full. To gain a better exploration of how children's understanding of 'play' and 'playfulness' is presented in the Welsh and English curriculum, two non-maintained schools will be used to examine these similarities and differences (Goodhall and Atkinson, 2020). A sample of sixteen children were used to analyse what their own understanding of 'play' is in the context of the school environment, during and beyond the school lessons. Informed consents were gained from the parents of these children through letters and information sheets. The message was clear and transparent, giving parents and children a clear knowledge about the purpose of this study, in gaining insights, into their own views on play from the onset of their curriculum progression (Goodhall and Atkinson, 2021). Where participants did not feel safe or confident about being monitored or observed during their activities, they

will have the right to be withdrawn from this research (BERA, 2024). Overall, the research was positive and indicated that the performance of Welsh students is better than that of its English students. Overall, information sheets are an invaluable opportunity for parents and researchers to gain a sense of trust and confidentiality to the researcher, focussing directly on the quality of high-learning provision that children are being provided with in their classroom environment in support of their play-based pedagogy (Truscott, 2024).

Legislation plays a crucial role in conducting ethical research in studies or literature in the Early Years Curriculum. Firstly, in the UK, data protection is governed by policies such as the UK's General Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and the Data Protection Act 2018 (GOV.UK, n/a). According to the UK's legislation website (2018), the Data Protection Act 2018 gives people the right to have access to their own personal data, with some exceptions. People have got a fundamental right to rectify their personal data if there are any mistakes or errors. They can either stop or restrict other third parties from using, storing and processing their data. Similarly, the UK Government highlights that people have got a stronger legal protection for their data such as race, ethnicity, backgrounds, religious beliefs, trade union membership or genetics (2018). Within the context of Early Years Education, the concept of ethics is rather complex and multi-faceted (Early Education, 2021). When conducting research with children, it is important that their rights and beliefs are being upheld and endorsed, as it is clearly laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The researcher should recognise the individual qualities, knowledge, and skills that children possess, in realising that they are ambitious and capable citizens who are participating in different communities (Early Education, 2021). To have a better understanding of what children's perceptions of 'play' and 'playfulness' are in the Welsh and English curriculum, a sample size of sixteen pupils and two teachers would be selected anonymously from two different maintained schools as part of the wider research (Goodhall and Atkinson, 2020). For this part of the study, an informed consent was gained from staff, teachers, headteachers, parents/carers, and pupils, through letters and information sheets. To protect some individuals from potential harm, pseudonyms were given to the names to comply with the legislative policy (Goodhall and Atkinson, 2021). Overall, children's perceptions of play were deemed to be positive, suggesting that both schools from England and Wales provide students plenty of opportunities to enhance their play-based learning in the context of their curriculum progression. Confidentiality is crucial in ethical research, in ensuring that people engage in sensitive activities without any sense of fear or oppression for what they are doing (UK Legislation, 2018).

Lastly, it is inevitable that there are always 'risks' when conducting research in an ethical manner. According to UWTSD (2022), some researchers may wish to

undertake a full risk assessment if the research process involves any of the following external factors: dealing with the public, environmental risks or use of hazardous equipment. In this proposal, a risk assessment would have to be implemented when dealing with young children whilst working in their school environment. Similarly, UWTSD (2022) suggested that if there are any allegations of research misconduct, then the investigation will be handled appropriately, fairly, sensitivity, and with confidentiality, to avoid any third parties being involved. However, according to the NSPCC (2023), when researching about children's experiences – such as their perceptions of 'play' and 'playfulness' in the Welsh and English curriculum – one of the issues is that researchers may provoke emotional or psychological stress to students, if the environment they are working in is not safe, and conducive towards fostering motivation, innovation, and happiness. Also, the UK government has explicitly suggested that when researchers are observing children, they should not be left alone one-to-one with a young person (under the age of sixteen), even if they have got a DBS check. They should familiarise themselves with the environment where pupils are being taught in, by reviewing the school's safeguarding policy and to adhere to the rules of the school community (Department of Education, n/a). Therefore, it is important that researchers think carefully through their duty of care, to identify any potential harm that teachers or students may encounter, and deal with them appropriately to mitigate these problems (BERA, 2024). They should also give participants any predictable problems that may face them during the observations or interviews when conducting the research (BERA, 2024). To minimise these risks when working with children, it is crucial that the researcher explains the nature of this research and what is expected of them. They should feel at ease with this study, not feel pressured to do anything difficult, and collect detailed information that would avoid distress from pupils (NSPCC, 2023). It will create an environment that will cultivate engagement with pupils in aiding our understanding of what their perceptions are of 'play' and 'playfulness' in the curriculum.

In conclusion, this research has analysed how children's perceptions of 'play' and 'playfulness' are embedded in the Welsh and English curriculum throughout the literature view, methodological considerations and ethical implications. In the future, it is reasonable to collect a larger sample size to see on a wider scale, whether purposeful, play-led pedagogy, that is deeply rooted in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the New Curriculum for Wales, is well represented across different schools in the two countries.

Module Code: ECEY5010
Student Number: 2406598
Word Count: 4255

Confirmation Statement – Use of Generative AI:

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own word. I confirm I have copies of my own drafts, notes and resources that I have previously used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Module Code: ECEY5010
Student Number: 2406598
Word Count: 4255

References:

- Ann-Powell, A., Taylor, N., Newell, S., Graham, A. and Fitzgerald, R. (2021) *Building Capacity for Ethical Research with Children and Young People: An international Research Project to Examine the Ethical Issues and Challenges in Undertaking Research with and for Children in Different Majority and Minority World Contexts*. Available at: <https://childethics.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Powell-et-al-2011.pdf> (Accessed: 19th May 2025).
- Balladares, J., Valdivia, R., Sprovera, I. and Cordova, J. (2025) 'Did you do something today, or did you solely play? Barriers and facilitators for the use of play in early childhood educational contexts', *Early Years*, pp. 1-16. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2024.2448452>
- BERA (2024) *Ethical guidelines for Educational Research*. Available at: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-fifth-edition-2024> (Accessed: 22 May 2025).
- Children's Commissioner for Wales (2018) *Article 31 – Spotlight Report*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Play-FINAL.pdf> (Accessed: 16 May 2025).
- Department of Education (2023) *Research with children and young people*. Available at: <https://user-research.education.gov.uk/guidance/ethics-and-safeguarding/research-with-children-and-young-people> (Accessed: 17 May 2025).
- Department of Education (2024) *Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for groups and school-based providers. Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/670fa42a30536cb92748328f/EYFS_statutory_framework_for_group_and_school_-_based_providers.pdf (Accessed: 23 May 2025).
- Early Education (2021) *Code of Ethics*. Available at: <https://early-education.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Code-of-Ethics.pdf> (Accessed: 18th May 2025).
- Education Wales (2022) *A curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/b1801d78-38c3-4320-9818-d9996c21aef8/220914-a-curriculum-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings.pdf> (Accessed: 20 May 2025)

- Gabrieli, G., Lee, A., Setoh, P. and Esposito, G. (2021) 'An analysis of the Generalizability and Stability of the Halo Effect During the COVID-19 Pandemic Outbreak', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12(1) pp. 1-9. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.631871>
- Goodhall, N. and Atkinson, C. (2020) 'An exploratory case study: Children's perceptions of play access in two schools (England and Wales)', *Educational and child psychology*, 37(4), pp. 37-52. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsecp.2020.37.4.37>
- Goodhall, N. and Atkinson, C. (2021) 'An exploratory case study: Children's comparative play access in English and Welsh classrooms', *International Journal of Play*, 10(3), pp. 203-227. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21594937.2021.1959230>
- Greig, A., Taylor, J. and MacKay, T. (2013) *Doing research with Children: A practical Guide*. City Road, London: SAGE Publications, Ltd.
- Jarvie, K. (2012) 'Qualitative research in Early Childhood Education and Care Implementation', *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 6(2), pp. 35-43. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/2268-6729-6-2-35> (Accessed: 23 May 2025).
- Kingston, D. and Siraj, I. (2017) 'Supporting the implementation of the Foundation Phase through Effective Professional Development', *Cylchgrawn Addysg Cymru/Wales Journal of Education*, 19(1), pp. 39-68. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.16922/wje.19.1.3>
- Mayne, F., Howitt, C. and Rennie, L. (2018) 'Rights, power and agency in early childhood research design: Developing a Rights-Based Research Ethics and Participation Planning Framework', *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 43(3), pp. 4-14. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.23965/AJEC.43.3.01>
- Nolan, A., Macfarlane, K. and Cartmel, J. (2013) *Research in early childhood*. Los Angeles, CA: SAFE Publications, Inc.
- NSPCC (2023) *Research with children: ethics, safety and promoting inclusion*. Available at: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/briefings/research-with-children-ethics-safety-promoting-inclusion> (Accessed: 20 May 2025).
- Oswald, D., Sherratt, F. and Smith, S. (2014) 'Handling the Hawthorne effect: The challenges surrounding a participant observer', *Review of Social Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 53-73.

Play for Wales (2024) *Planning for Play – involving children*. Available at: https://play.wales/publications_category/play-for-wales-issue-64/ (Accessed: 18 May 2025).

Sevon, E., Mustola, M., Siippainen, A. and Vlasov, J. (2025) 'Participatory research methods with young children: a systematic literature review.' *Educational Review*, 77(3), pp. 1000-1018. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2023.2215465>

Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2009) 'Conceptualising progression in the pedagogy of play and sustained shared thinking in early childhood education: a Vygotskian approach', *Education and Child Psychology*, 26(2), pp. 77-89. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsecp.2009.26.2.77>

Stewart, S., MacDonald, N. and Waters-Davies, J. (2024) 'Early Childhood in Wales: Policy, Promises and Realities,' *Cylchgrawn Addysg Cymru/Wales Journal of Education*, 26(2), pp. 125-139. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.16922/wje.26.2.9>

Te One, S. (2012) 'Supporting children's participation rights', in Harcourt, D., Perry, B. and Waller T. (1st eds) *Researching young children's perspectives: debating the ethics and dilemmas of educational research with children*. London: Routledge, pp. 85-95.

The Open University (2021) *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in STEM – Triangulation*. Available at: <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=109325§ion=2.2.3> (Accessed: 18 May 2025).

Truscott, T. (2024) *Supporting children to make informed decisions about research participation*. Available at: <https://childethics.com/blog/supporting-children-to-make-informed-decisions-about-research-participation/> (Accessed: 21 May 2025).

University of Cambridge (2025) *Participant information sheets and consent forms*. Available at: <https://www.research-integrity.admin.cam.ac.uk/research-ethics/ethics-application-guidance/consent-forms-and-participant-information-sheets> (Accessed: 18 May 2025).

University of Newcastle (2024) *Research Methods: What are research methods?* Available at: <https://libguides.newcastle.edu.au/researchmethods> (Accessed: 15 May 2025).

University of Oxford (2021) *Informed Consent – Information and Guidance for Researchers*. Available at:

Module Code: ECEY5010
Student Number: 2406598
Word Count: 4255

<https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/resources/consent>
(Accessed: 19 May 2025).

UWTSD (2022) *Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice*. Available at:
<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-integrity-and-ethics> (Accessed: 21
May 2025).

Wainright, N., Goodway, J., Whitehead, M. and Williams, A. (2019) 'Playful pedagogy
for deeper learning: exploring the implementation of the play based
Foundation Phase in Wales', *Early child development and care*, 190(1), pp. 43-
53. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2019.1653551>

Welsh Government (2024) *Curriculum for Wales: Annual Report 2024*. Available at:
[https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-
versions/2024/10/4/1728576137/curriculum-wales-annual-report-2024.pdf](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2024/10/4/1728576137/curriculum-wales-annual-report-2024.pdf)
(Accessed: 22 May 2025).