

Section 1

Play England (2020)¹) describes play as an activity that is led by the child and is based on their personal interests and ideas. Early Years Matters (2020)²) agrees and suggests that activities ought to be based on the child's interests and the experiences they have gained during their lives.

Family Lives (no date)³) suggests that play an important aspect of the child's learning, as through play many skills are developed, such as language, social, emotional and creativity. The Welsh Government (2015)⁴) agrees and suggests that play gives the child an understanding of themselves and their surroundings. As suggested by Play and Psychoanalysis: Insights Feature (2017)⁸), Winnicott supports this and believed that play had an important role in a child's development and is essential to enable the child to reach an understanding of their own thoughts and feelings.

Aubery and Riley (2019)⁶) describes self-directed as the child being in control of their learning and knowing the best way to gain what they want from the activity.

As suggested by nidirect (no date)⁵), self-directed play happens when a child freely chooses an unstructured activity, without being directed by an adult. Based on their personal interests, the child knows how and why they play something. According to The Montessori School (2020)⁹), from an early age, in an environment which is safely prepared by the adult, self-directed play enables the child to experience independence by being in charge of their play, therefore initiation their own outcomes in their learning. This motivates the child to challenge themselves to learn new things and use their imagination to turn natural object into something new, for example, a cardboard box could be used as a car.

It is suggested by Nature Play (2012)¹³) that the role of the adult during self-directed play is important, as the adult provides the child with the feeling of security. It is suggested that the adult's role includes creating a safe environment for play to take place and although the adult can take a step back, the adult is still present to observe

the child at play, is able to provide support if required and allow the child the freedom to develop their learning independently.

Foundation Education (2018)¹²) suggests that a holistic approach enables children to access the natural environment, giving an opportunity to learn and interact while experiencing challenges, risk-taking and social development. According to Scottish Social Services Council (no date)⁷), a holistic approach acknowledges the link between mind, body and spirit. It suggests that taking a holistic approach to a child's needs is important, as it focusses on the child's physical, personal, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing, as well as the child's cognitive development, ensuring each child is seen as an individual. The Welsh Assembly Government (2009)¹⁶) suggests that children learn and are more able to retain information when these skills are developed to their full potential.

Howard and McInnes (2013)¹⁰) indicate that a child's development is enhanced from playing outdoors, resulting in the growing number of Forest Schools. It is suggested that outdoor play allows the child to gain experience from learning in their natural habitat. Learning in the Leaves (2018)¹⁴) suggests that forest school settings are a suitable environment to support a child's holistic development. It suggests that outdoor play provides many activities which enables each aspect of a child's development to progress, whether it be one aspect at a time, or many aspects developing simultaneously.

As suggested by Froebel Trust (no date)¹⁵), Froebel supports this and recognises the outdoors to be an environment where children of all ages can learn and develop an understanding of their natural outdoor world. Like Montessori School, it is suggested that a Froebelian environment provides children with the opportunity for imaginative play, by enabling them to become creative thinkers by altering the form of an object to be used as another.

Nidirect (no date)¹¹) suggests that outdoor play is a natural way to encourage children to be physically active, aiding in the increase of the child's well-being. A child's health can be benefited through playing outdoors, as the child experiences a sense of freedom, allowing the child's physical movements to be unrestricted due to the space the outdoors gives them, which aids in preventing obesity in adulthood. The Welsh Assembly Government (2009)¹⁶) agrees, suggesting that children benefit in several ways when the outdoors is used as a learning resource. It suggests that the outdoors increases a child's development as it overflows with stimuli such as weather, sounds, smell and textures. While outdoors, children can play using equipment which would not be used indoors, benefiting the child's health and fitness; children gain first-hand experience of nature and are able to see how the weather and living things change seasonally; as well as problem solving and gain an enjoyment for the outdoors.

Section 2

The Health and Safety Executive (2012)²⁶), also known as the HSE, suggests that children are often discouraged from taking part in a specific activity due to the misunderstanding of Health and Safety laws and regulations. The HSE (2012)²⁶) recognises that although children should experience risk in a managed environment, this misunderstanding prevents children from being exposed to challenging environments or to certain objects, therefore hampering a child's learning and potential. Play Wales (2015)²⁷) suggests that from challenging play, children gain opportunities that develop their resilience, supporting them to deal with fear and failure and learn that it is satisfactory to fail at something, but acceptable to try again.

Early Years Resources (2018)²⁵) identifies that although children should be prevented from harm, they should be encouraged to investigate risk. However, when taking risks, children require support to develop their learning and development. It is suggested that children are challenged physically, mentally and emotionally by risky play, learning to conquer their anxieties.

According to Early Education (2011)¹⁷), children become experts at exploring what their bodies can do. Through play, children discover their strength, their speed, how noisy they can be and how high they feel is safe for them when they climb. It is suggested that this includes an amount of risk and challenges, not only for the child, but for the adult also. It is important that the adult realises which of their apprehensions are valuable and be able to allow the child to make their own decision and work out the risks for themselves. Play Wales (2015)²⁷) recognise that adults pass on their fears to children, causing the child to take those fears on as their own and become uneasy to take part in an activity.

Play Wales (2002)¹⁸) agrees, and suggests that through experimentation, children recognise their restrictions and capabilities when faced with a challenge. It is suggested that children experience risk-taking through play. This is key to developing the child's confidence and competence which is required for their personal development, resilience, and existence. Children come face to face with hazardous situations during their lives and through play, they can experience and enhance their judgement and develop their capability of managing risk.

Empty classroom day (2016)²¹) indicates that children are frequently limited to risk due the adult's fears of what will occur as the result of risk taking. It is acknowledged that risk benefit assessment is ideal for creating a balanced approach when risk and benefits are concerned. As suggested by Play England (2015)¹⁹), a risk-benefit assessment allows comparison of both the risks and the benefits of an activity, focusing on the hazards that may cause injury to the child. Although adults are unable to provide a risk-free environment, it is possible to provide an environment that is safe and allows children to take and judge risk independently. Adults have the responsibility of undertaking a satisfactory risk assessment of their facilities and implement health and safety measures that will lessen the probability of an injury. It is important to regularly evaluate the risks of injury and the benefits play provides for the child, as experiences and common expectations can change. Early Education (no date)²⁰) also acknowledges the adult's responsibility of providing children with play opportunities and experiences of risk, whilst ensuring they are safe from injury.

Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (2021)²²) suggests that there are many children who are not encouraged to independently take part in challenging experiences that enhance their self-esteem and confidence. It is suggested that this withholds the child from developing personal skills and the resilience they need for their future development, including their health and well-being. The risks involved in taking part in an activity can be managed and made safe through suitable planning, supervising the children, using the correct equipment, and considering other variables such as the weather.

As suggested by Cowgate Under 5's Centre (2021)²⁴), Froebel identified play as a method used by a child to gain knowledge from experiencing pleasure and challenge. It suggests that a Froebelian approach acknowledges the individuality of every child, taking a holistic perspective to their development in the outdoors. According to Nursery World (2017)²³), a Froebelian approach provides children with possibilities that encourage them to willingly experience risk. It suggests Froebel indicated that children who have been discouraged from experiencing risk and challenges are less likely to recognise their own potential and abilities, when compared to a child who has experienced risk, therefore are susceptible to injury from hazards.

Section 3

As suggested by Early Years Wales (2020)³³) the Foundation Phase is the national curriculum for Wales for all children aged 3 to 7 years. According to the Welsh Government (2017)²⁸), throughout a child's duration in the Foundation Phase, the Foundation Phase Profile is used nationally as an observation tool to assess a child's progress and skills and portray a holistic view of the child's development and ability in its four Areas of Learning. These Areas of Learning include: Personal and Social Development; Well-being and Cultural Diversity; Language, Literacy and Communication Skills; Mathematical Development and Physical Development.

As suggested by Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years, also known as PACEY (2017)³⁷), the aim of the Foundation Phase Profile is to enable practitioners working with young children to observe and assess consistently across the nation. As suggested by the Welsh Government (2012)³⁸), the language used within the Profile may be a disadvantage to the observer, as the terminology used can be difficult to interpret and therefore the level of understanding is not known, causing an inconsistency in assessments across the nation.

It is suggested by PACEY (2017)³⁷) that children's development from six months to seven years is assessed within the profile, with skills characterised as outcomes, starting with Bronze, Silver and Gold and proceeding through to developmental outcomes 1-6. PACEY (2017)³⁷) indicates that the profile can be used in early years settings to record the child's achievements, and with parental consent, can be used as an aid in the child's transition into school or an alternative childcare setting.

The Welsh Government (2018)²⁹) suggests that the Foundation Phase Profile was made lawful in September 2015 and is used to provide a baseline assessment of the child's development during the first six weeks from the child's time of entry, through to Year 2, at the end of the Foundation Phase. As suggested by the Welsh government (2017)²⁸), the profile is an assessment tool that affiliates with end of phase outcomes and assists practitioners in delivering a holistic curriculum.

The Welsh Government (2018)²⁹) indicates that the Foundation Phase Profile is made up of two parts: The Compact Profile and The Full Profile, both supporting the child's assessment. It is suggested that the Compact Profile provides a glimpse of a child's development and should be used for a baseline assessment carried out during the first 6 weeks of Reception class, as the skills included are easily observed at school entry, allowing the practitioner to create one outcome for each Area of Learning within the profile. It focuses on a particular set of skill ladders and assists in early identifying additional learning needs or developmental delays which cause a barrier to the child's

learning. As suggested by the Welsh Government (2018)²⁹, The Full Profile is a more detailed assessment with more comprehensive skills, giving the practitioner a broader view of the child's progression and enables the formation of one outcome for each Area of learning that falls in line with the Compact Profile, as the child makes their journey through the Foundation Phase and at the end of Year 2. PACEY (2017)³⁷ suggests that the Full profile is made up of 43 skill ladders, with the Compact Profile made up of a condensed amount of 16 skill ladders.

Although the Welsh Government (2017)²⁸ suggests that the profile can aid in the early recognition of developmental delay, special educational needs or additional learning and also indicate the interventions the child may require, the Welsh Government (2018)²⁹ however, suggests that the profile does not supply adequate Information to fully assess a child with learning difficulties, therefore does not provide the practitioner with the necessary information relating to the child's progress. It is suggested that the profile should be used alongside other observations which have been taken by other health professionals.

Section 4

Howard and McInnes (2013)¹⁰ suggest that children progress in several ways and that play has a role in strengthening the child's development across the areas of learning. It is suggested that play is a beneficial resource for observation and assessment, as when children are happy at play, their performance is at its best, giving an opportunity for adults to naturally observe the child and gain a true reflection of their developing skills. SAGE Publications (no date)³⁴ supports this, by highlighting that children are more likely to respond naturally when they are observed in an environment which feels comfortable and natural to them.

Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years, also known as PACEY (2020)³⁰, suggests that undertaking regular observations is part of a practitioner's role. SAGE Publications (no date) supports this, suggesting it is the duty and

responsibility of the practitioner to keep track of the progression a child is making. As suggested by The Welsh Assembly Government (2008)³¹) and PACEY (2016)³²), observations are essential as it allows the practitioner to get acquainted with the child, discovering the child's likes and dislikes. It is also suggested that observations provide the practitioner with a clear perception of the child's learning and development and the ability to identify any difficulties. This is supported by Howard and McInnes (2013)¹⁰), suggesting that observation and assessment of the child at play allow the practitioner to increase their knowledge and gain better understanding of the child's needs and progress. It is suggested that this can be strengthened by amalgamating observations and assessments, in order to give the practitioner a more informed view of the child's development and therefore less likely to make an error.

According to McInnes et al. (2011)³⁵), the child's perception of an activity is influenced by using cues, enabling them to differentiate between play and not play activities. It is suggested that these cues include the environment in which an activity takes place, the type of activity carried out and the participation of an adult during the activity. It is suggested that these cues are used by the child to characterise an activity as play or work. Howard and McInnes (2012)³⁶) support this by suggesting children consider play as an activity that takes place on the floor, where participation is the child's choice and not play as an activity which takes place at a table, where the child's participation is instructed by the adult.

As suggested by McInnes et al. (2011)³⁵), the presence of an adult is important during play, as children become more involved in an activity and display positive behaviour when an adult is nearby and are not directly involved in the activity. According McInnes et al. (2011)³⁵), children are less likely to use the adult's presence as a cue to play if co-construction is effectively attained during activities, thus viewing a greater variety of activities as play. It is suggested that when given choice and having power over an activity, children are unlikely to use adult presence as a cue, therefore demonstrating a playful approach to activities that will develop and strengthen learning behaviours which will motivate the child to succeed. McInnes et al (2013)³⁸) suggests that choice

enables the child to regard the adult as playful and therefore not associate the adult's presence to between play and not play activities.

According to Howard and McInnes (2013)(10), it is thought that during an activity that is regarded as play, the child shows an increase in engagement; well-being; problem solving and performance than when the same activity is considered as not play. It is suggested that during a play activity, independence is enhanced by children taking charge of their activity, which increases their confidence and self-esteem, supporting their well-being. Howard and McInnes (2012)(36) suggest that children show gestures of happiness and emotional well-being when an activity is thought to be play, by smiling and laughing, showing enjoyment and interest, and displaying relaxed body movements, as opposed to children who see an activity as not-play, who are less interested in the activity and display negative non-verbal behaviour.

It is recognised by Howard and McInnes (2012)(36) that play during observation can be supported by the adult through carefully planning activities that provide the child with opportunities for play and are considered as play by the child. It is thought that the continuation of professional development is beneficial, as knowledge and understanding relating to children's recognition of play is enhanced, supporting the practitioner to create lively and playful environments for children.