



The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that all children have the right to play. Play unlocks essential skills and promotes wellbeing.

“Play creates a brain that has increased flexibility and improved potential for learning later in life.”

Lester & Russell, 2008

Why Play to Learn?

Through play, children develop **5 flexible skills** that are important for learning, life and work.

[Based on Learning Through Play, Lego Foundation](#)

PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	EMOTIONAL	COGNITIVE	CREATIVE
Play makes children physically and mentally strong through developing their gross and or fine motor skills, important for coordination and writing development.	Play enables children to work together to solve problems, listen to others, develop ideas and negotiate.	Play provides children with the opportunity to experience success and develop emotional resilience when things do not go to plan.	When learning is playful children are immersed in creating strategies and solving problems, developing the flexible thinking necessary for what the world has to offer them.	Creative play puts children in charge of exploring ideas, relationships, spaces and problems. It sparks confidence, as they learn to trust their natural curiosity.

Play is not another thing to do. It is ***another way*** to do what we do: **learn**. Play **IS** learning.



Supporting children’s wellbeing is a priority to ensure that Cawdor is a safe, welcoming, fun and happy place for everyone to achieve their goals.

Play prepares the brain for wellbeing	Playing with others nurtures empathy and resilience	Play helps children cope with change
When we are enjoying ourselves, our brain releases a chemical called dopamine, a crucial part of how we motivate ourselves. Healthy levels of dopamine are linked to better memory, creativity and mental flexibility. Research shows clear links between regular playtime and happier, more settled, healthier children and families.	Children learn to celebrate wins and deal with disappointment and are able to practise looking at life from someone else’s perspective.	Play helps children boost their natural resilience - so they find moments of calm and control, no matter what is happening around them.

Risk

Based on Play Scotland, Learning About Risk and Challenge

“As they grow and develop children need to learn about risk and how to manage it. It is argued that experiencing the unexpected during play offers children the chance to challenge their physical, emotional and social boundaries, building the skills to understand risk. Risk takes many different forms and, although not always welcome, is seen by children as something they need to manage. If children’s activities are dominated by adults their opportunities for testing themselves at their own pace are inhibited.

Through our approaches to learning through play in Cawdor, we support children to manage risk.

When Play?

Research shows that our children learn best in a high quality environment: the space they learn in, the experiences they have and the positive interactions with adults and other children. Play is one approach that we use to support children’s development, learning and wellbeing.

- For our youngest children, play directed by them and supported by adults is the dominant approach. This is planned for alongside short spells of adult direction and teaching.
- As our children grow and develop, the balance is weighted to longer periods of adult direction, teaching and practising skills, with spells of child and adult initiated play woven into their day.



What is Loose Parts Play?

“Loose parts create richer environments for children, allowing them to do what they need to do, to follow their interests and go where their curiosity takes them. Environments full of loose parts lend themselves to a blurring of distinctions between learning and playing, allowing children to experiment, enjoy and find things out for themselves.”

[Play Scotland, Loose Parts Play Toolkit, 2019](#)

We have been developing our outdoor space in our ELC setting and in our playground to support children’s learning through loose parts play. We have a range of loose parts available to support the development of children’s physical, social, emotional, cognitive and creative skills.

PLAY SCOTLAND have information on Loose Parts Play which we have used to shape our approach as part of children’s planned learning and during their free play. We have created a risk assessment for Loose Parts Play which we review regularly, and used this to develop our Charter for Loose Parts Play to ensure safety, learning and enjoyment.