

## Loose Parts Play Dundee Schools Report (August 20 – April 21)

### Introduction

ScrapAntics' commission through Dundee City Council, (DCC), to promote play outdoors within schools was consolidated during the pandemic of Covid 19. A package of 100 days of facilitated play days was procured through Audrey White. Priority was placed on resettling children in their return to the classroom after extended periods of no school due to covid 19 lockdown.

Our aim is to support children's health and well-being and promote staff confidence in using Loose Parts Play, (LPP), to promote educational outcomes. The pandemic having closed schools for extended amounts of time, concerns were raised as to the impacts this would have on all children but especially those from low income families.

Global reports stated, *"the fact that schools are closed for a long period of time could have detrimental social and health consequences for children living in poverty and are likely to exacerbate existing inequalities."*

Scottish government reports stated, *"the fact that schools are closed for a long period of time could have detrimental social and health consequences for children living in poverty and are likely to exacerbate existing inequalities."*

On the return to schools *"The majority of teachers surveyed think coronavirus has negatively affected their pupils' educational attainment (80%) and their pupil's mental health and wellbeing (75%)."*

Schools to be included in the collegiate group package

- |                 |              |                            |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| ■ Victoria Park | ■ Glebelands | ■ St Marys                 |
| ■ Craigowl      | ■ St Andrews | ■ St Francis               |
| ■ St Fergus     | ■ Longhaugh  | ■ Eastern and Craigie High |

*"The key learning from the Playful Schools project has been that even within the complexities presented by Covid-19, children need to play. The research identified a clear relationship between the way children engaged with play, the contextual factors that supported their play, and their social, emotional, physical and cognitive development."*

*Playful Schools: The power of Loose Parts Play*

## On -Line CLPL

Although the service was meant to be hands on and run in the schools from August, national government guidance prevented peripatetic staff going into schools till October 20. In response ScrapAntics created a 2 module CLPL on-line teacher training programme to embed Loose Parts in Schools, and compliment staff understandings to promote a whole school approach to learning outdoors linked with the curriculum.

The modules were delivered over zoom in 1.5 hr session extra attention was given to ensure there was time to give staff to learn and share information together and resource links and simple takeaways were accompanied by a broad resource pack with a suggested professional development task. Over 11 sessions we reached 222 staff members from 19 of Dundee's Primary Schools.

### ScrapAntics On-line CLPL specialist training included:

- Play pedagogy
- Facilitating child-led free play
- Observing play and documenting play-based learning
- Contribution of play to children's social, emotional, physical and cognitive development
- Power dynamics and children's play
- Inclusion and engagement
- Responding to emotional and behavioural needs
- Planning, preparation and potential barriers
- Dynamic risk assessment
- Delivering Loose Parts Play within Covid-19

### Table documenting CLPL's booked through 'My Learn'

Schools included x19	Date	CLPL Module	No. of Attendees
Sidlaw View      St Francis	29.10.20	1	13
St Clements      Coldside	05.11.20	1	16
	19.11.20	2	17
Ancrum Rd      Glebelands	26.11.20	2	14
	18.02.21	1	17
St Mary's      Mill of Mains	11.03.21`	2	19
St Peter      St Paul	Total		<b>96</b>

  

Table of whole school bookings				
Date	CLPL Module	No. of Attendees	School	
13.11.20	1	17	Eastern	
13.11.20	1	16	Eastern	
16.02.21	2	16	Eastern	
26.01.21	1	34	Balgarthno Campus	
23.02.21	2	34	Balgarthno Campus	
Totals		<b>117</b>		

Whilst the on-line sessions created multi service links and promoted the accessibility of using LPP to promote learning in the return to normality within schools, there still seemed to be a lot of confusion and fear of providing sessions safely.

ScrapAntics have been able to signpost schools to our toolkit, as well as provide direct information, research and techniques on how to provide Loose Parts Play during Lockdown. We have also been able to make links with other national play specialists such as Juliette Robinson and resources on Play Scotland's website. Feedback from attendees was good and the sessions were well received with staff saying...

*"I am looking forward to and am excited to use loose parts in more teaching sessions, last week I bought some of the objects into the classroom and we made space rockets... talking about what we had done, helped us create stories that we then created a written piece of work around..." P4 teacher*

*"It's amazing the children you think will cause the most issues actually behave better than in class"*



*Image description:  
A collection of Loose Parts a child has curated into a den.*

## Play Sessions delivered directly in Schools

As of the 23rd of February 21, a team of 3 ScrapAntics' play workers have been able to go into schools' full time and provide a hands-on approach to creating whole school approaches to education and links with the outdoors.

Play sessions have a slow transition to reaching 'Free play' and provide a holistic approach whilst displaying a range of different implementation methods of creating sessions, giving staff confidence and a wealth of ideas.

Due to Covid 19's impact on mental health and well-being displayed through different behavioural issues, schools have been offered to put forward 2 target groups, of up to 8 children to focus sessions around emotional, social or difficult boisterous behaviours.

In a second session on the same day a whole class approach is facilitated to concentrate pupils exploring through senses to create educational outcomes whilst raising esteems. Promoting ownership of the outdoor environment, and an ability to engage socially in a more inclusive way.

The hope is to support children to regain their independence and an understanding of how they individually impact those around them and take more responsibility. Successes are expected to be individual and be initial small steps, which is why we have 2 sessions a day dedicated to working with a small group of 8 pupils who can be targeted as requiring extra help.

From these groups only 2 children will be referenced in an Assess Plan Do Review, (APDR), and schools have been encouraged to work in collaboration with the Cities Child psychologists.

As of the end of April 21, ScrapAntics have delivered 64% of the hands on facilitated sessions.

I have attached some of the learning from one of our play workers...



*Image description:*

*image taken by a play worker  
There are 13 children hidden in this photo!*

## Successes:

The children have responded brilliantly well to a variety of play prompts, games and challenges including but not limited to: sharing parts, negotiating, teamwork, physical challenges like running, stretching and balancing, den building, tower building, hide and seek, marble runs, obstacle courses, competitions, floor is lava, taking the lead, following narratives, creating their own games and gauging risks of their play.

Favourite game of Craigowl primary 4b included 'the Lpp bank' or 'trading game'. Starting with 2 even teams, the challenge is to build a den or similar, 3 piles of parts, 2 teams each with a pile, the third and largest is the 'bank' where someone (initially a teacher or play worker) is the banker, pupils can trade one item they have for another they want.

The children responded incredibly well to blending challenges or guided play with free/ open play, some preferring one format to the other but majority engaging in both approaches.

O of (Craigowl 4b) has shown improved attention, reduced aggressive behaviour and an evident increase in confidence during Lpp sessions.

J of (St Francis 5a): at the beginnings of Lpp sessions used to exclude himself physically, he was distant and behaviourally withdrawn. This was notably absent from session 3 onwards.

The class of 5b St Francis showed so much improved understanding empathy and responsibility that it was possible to bring the maximum parts at once to be accessed which in turn allowed for wider range of play.

## Challenges:

The weather:

Especially wet days prove a challenge as surfaces can get very muddy and slippery, as well as the parts themselves becoming very muddy and difficult to clean.

High winds can cause LP's to become unstable. This can limit the children ability to building and play safely.

T of (Craigowl 4b) shows improved confidence and communication in tasks as well as conflict resolution skills between others inside target group but these improvements are not yet translating in the whole class setting.

St Francis shares a school playground with another school, thus can prove difficult to manage covid restrictions when both schools are present and loose parts are out.

Behaviours of children are sometimes unavoidably boisterous, risky or, teachers are often made uncomfortable by this behaviour in a school setting and can intervene before the child has the opportunity to self-regulate or navigate the situation themselves.

## Teacher feedback:

The sessions have had received excellent feedback including *'I have learned so much from Lauren' - Wendy Thomson (Craigowl 4b)*  
The children really seemed to get a lot from the trading game.

Children do not always have access to suitable outdoor recreational clothing or waterproof footwear to allow for dry warm play. If the school provides these then teachers will factor in an additional 10 minutes to get them all dressed.

One teacher (Craigowl) felt time for set up and putting away was a 'stumbling block' to how likely they were to continue regular Lpp sessions after the ScrapAntics staff were no longer doing this on the classes' behalf.

Enthusiasm from teachers at St Francis to continue with the loose parts play sessions and even expand their use to the Additional support hub within the school for a regular slot.

## Conclusion and moving Forward

Having created a new platform in the schools we need to continue building the relationship with schools to create links for teachers to create a focused approach to how we can raise educational goals for children who struggle academically to achieve. This will be partially achieved by holding a shared learning session over teams on the 10th of June 21 where a selection of head teachers and class teachers will share what they have found over the last year, with opportunities for teachers to discuss in smaller groups what they have to be difficult areas.

In the next semester ScrapAntics would hope to further the use of LPP in directly supporting the curriculum. Working outdoors to create a directory of lesson plans, alongside teaching staff that can be shared, promoting a whole city approach that could directly link with all areas of the STEAM curriculum.

During this contract we have made introductory steps to taking Play and LPP into secondary schools. So far this has involved only working with Craigie high and will initially be for transition years P7-S2 and pupils with additional support needs, (ASN). Documenting the successes, we will hope to build on this in the next few years to involve more schools round the city, supporting young peoples' independence and access to transferable skills as they move into young adulthood through play, design and challenge-based learning.

I would like to use this chance to say a big thank you for allowing us the chance to work with the schools of Dundee. To our play workers and the young people involved. Covid 19 has forced us all to adapt and applied many new pressures in a time of such uncertainty. Our playful schools project was initiated out of a concern as to how some of our most vulnerable children would find the support they needed to thrive. We hope that LPP has enabled young people to find respite from the pressures of every-day and time to sift through emotions and feelings whilst finding new norms. I would welcome any feedback going forward.

Sandy

**Report written by Sandy Greene for ScrapAntics**