PLAY AND MENTAL HEALTH AT SCHOOL

Play is of vital importance to a child's physical and mental health.

Here are a few reasons why children need to have ample time to play within the school day:

1. **Play helps combats childhood obesity.** *Play includes muscle strengthening, and bone strengthening activities. Research has proven that children and young people need an hour or more of physical activity each day. However, almost one in four children does not participate in any free-time physical activity, and the average child now spends more time indoors with electronic games. The number of overweight children has increased dramatically over the years.*

2. **Play is crucial to a child's cognitive development.** *Clinically diagnosable mental health problems amongst children are dramatically increasing and have been linked to declining opportunities for creative, interactive play. More children are being diagnosed with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, depression and anxiety disorders.*

3. **Outdoor play ensures that kids get enough Vitamin D.** *Beyond the risk of developing weak bones and even rickets, not getting enough Vitamin D often goes hand-in-hand with higher blood pressure and lower levels of good cholesterol, and may increase a child's risk of developing heart disease later in life. Recent media has shown that rickets have been shown in children in the UK.*

4. **Play and physical activity stimulate the brain.** *Research has shown that children who walk to school and who are allowed to take breaks from class work to be physically active during the school day are often better able to concentrate on their school work and their attention spans are longer. Research has also shown that children learn through play.*

5. **Play reduces stress.** *Free play allows a child to burn off any excess energy and anxieties.*

6. **Play helps social development**. *Playing at break times learn the rules of social interaction that will, in turn, help them in all of their relationships and develop social skills.*