A CHILDREN’S MAP OF AUCHTERTOOL

SEPTEMBER 2019

BACKGROUND:

This case study details the outcomes and process of a lively conversation held by A Place in Childhood (APiC) and schoolteachers, with all the children of Auchtertool Primary School, Fife, Scotland.

The project formed a component of a Scottish Government commissioned project to develop pilot Place Standard Tools for Children and Young People, led by Play Scotland in partnership with APiC. The outcomes of this process that relate explicitly to that tool are not detailed in this case study report but will be publicly available later in 2020.

TASKS

Three sessions each were conducted with a P1-P4 group of around 24 children, and P5-7 group of around 18, using a Playful Pedagogical approach that met multiple Social Studies Experiences & Outcomes.

The goal of the conversation was to build a Children's Map of Auchtertool, through a child-led, experiential process where pupils came together to agree:

1. what was important to their life in the village
2. where they felt improvements were needed
3. which were the main priorities for action.

As we worked across the school from P1-P7, we designed tasks to enable children at all levels of development to contribute in the way that made most sense to them. It built upon their existing capacities, and by sharing outputs between classes we were also able to gain a big picture of how experiences and interests differ between the age groups.

In the first session, each group took us on a tour of the village which they had designed. This was to show us where they lived and what was important from their point-of-view, so we could experience and understand this for ourselves. We all took photographs and made videos along the way of what was important and held up smiley, sad and neutral faces to show what we thought of certain places.

In the second session, they discussed and agreed a complete Children’s Map of Auchtertool which drew on the tour, and a set of priorities for improvement. In the third and final session, they then discussed how the Place Standard Tool might be adapted to suit their understandings and priorities.

In the sections below, we first show the final map produced in collaboration with the pupils. We then give an overview of the main issues and priorities for action which emerged from the discussion. There was considerable consensus across both groups of these, despite taking part separately. We end by drawing out the contribution this project made to meeting elements of the Curriculum for Excellence.

CHILDREN’S MAP OF AUCHTERTOOL:

Overleaf is the final map of the places and things in Auchtertool all children agreed by consent to be important, or which needed improving.
Places (and things) to be protected were:

- **Our Fields** around the village (including one ‘special’ field which provided a route from the Playpark to the Bottom “Crayfish” Burn, and another which is home to some chickens).
- **Our Families and Friends**.
- **Our Local ‘Nature’**
- **Our Secret Places and Paths** (little used or known to grown-ups)
- **Our ‘right-sized’ Village**, i.e. a significant majority of children cherished Auchtertool’s rural character and did not want to lose this and the surrounding fields to new housing or economic development.
- **Our Important Places** including the **Play Park**; the **Village Hall** (for parties, clubs, social events and play); the **Bottom Burn** (one of only 5 in Scotland where crayfish still live); the **Village Green** (location of the war memorial and Christmas Tree), a **secret area** to the East of the Village where there is a ‘rat-infested’ den and rope swing; a derelict **Post Office** (highly valued for being the local ‘creepy’ place); the **Camilla Care Home** over the road from the school (for providing local employment, care for older people and family members, and a place where children can interact with them); **Camilla Loch**; the **Waterfall**; the **Old Kirk**; **Balmuto Castle**; an old **Ruin**; and various **small woods, climbing trees**, and some (legendary) **caves**!

Main Priorities and Issues for Improvement were:

1. **(All Children) Traffic Lights (or a dinosaur) on the B925 opposite the school.** The children proposed, and were unanimous in their support for traffic lights near the school, notorious for speeding cars and trucks. This could be activated by pedestrians or by vehicles
which break the speed limit. An alternative was a big dinosaur outside the school under whose legs people could cross the road safely and which would swallow speeding vehicles, to be released only when drivers had paid a substantial fine to the children.

Children noted that drivers seem unaware of the primary school, which is set back from the road, and accelerate or overtake on this stretch because there are no speed bumps. The B925 effectively slices the Children’s Map of Auchtertool in two, in that children routinely need to cross or walk narrow paths beside it to get to friend’s houses, the school, the play park and other favourite places. It is also a ‘short cut’ for local commuters and truck drivers, the latter who don’t need to slow down because their wheels clear the bumps on both sides. All children were adamant that all measures taken so far to address speeding had not worked or made the road any safer, with many describing ‘near-misses’.

Other safety measures proposed by the children included speed cameras, substantial fines (which would be used by the children to invest in other improvements), and larger and better signage at danger spots, particularly, where the road enters the village or close to the school.

2. (All Children) Improved Play Facilities and Access. All children agreed that the current Playpark needed a zipline, roundabout, seesaw and basket swing. All P5-7s agreed Auchtertool would also benefit from a skate and bike park (although the idea was more popular with the boys).

3. (All Children) Protecting and enhancing local nature. All children were in agreement on the importance of action to take care of the nature in and around the village. A top priority was protecting the Bottom Burn, one of the last (5) homes for freshwater crayfish in Scotland. Another, was planting ‘lots more’ trees locally, for playing, building treehouses, climbing, sheltering playing fields and parks from the rain, and to provide homes for animals and birds.

4. (All Children) Safe Cycle Paths and Access. All children agreed the village needed a safe cycle path, which would enable them to bike from home to school, the play park, and other important places, and link to the cycle route to Kirkcaldy which started on the B925 outside the village.

5. (All Children) A Village Shop. The children strongly supported the reintroduction of a general store, proposing an ideal location to be the empty premises formerly occupied by a village shop (remembered by the older children), and subsequently, the Kiwi Pub, and Tiel Restaurant. It was essential for the children that the shop sell sweets, stationery and toys, but said it must also stock food and groceries, and have an ATM, enabling their parents, and elderly people who might find travel difficult, to get all they needed in the village.

6. (All Children) A Village Nursery and High School. All children wished there were educational facilities in the village such as they wouldn’t have to travel too far to get to them, or be split up from their friends before or after primary school. This was particularly so for P1-4 who thought it silly and difficult for them to be separated from best friends to go to different nurseries as toddlers, only then to be reunited again when they started primary school.

7. (P5-7) Cleaning-up Auchtertool. The older children were unanimous that a top priority was stopping people who let their dogs foul on the Village Green, Play Park, streets, and other places children play. Measures proposed included children making poo bag dispensers and clear signage and putting them in the worst affected places, and imposing substantial fines for intentional violation. Other important actions agreed included fixing a broken bench in the play park, cleaning up the bird poo on village benches, and clearing up the litter which drivers throw from their cars as they pass through.
8. **Other popular improvements:**

- Many felt their school life could be improved. Suggestions included (i) shorter work periods; (ii) nicer school uniforms; (iii) separation between older and younger children during playtime, so the older could play more energetic games like tig.
- Many P1-4s thought there should be more opportunities for children to help and interact with the elderly people in the Camilla House Care Home across the road from the school, for the benefit of both.
- Many felt the village would benefit from more community events where ideas included a local festival and book club.
- Many felt they were often told off unfairly by some grown-ups in the village when they were just talking and playing with their friends.

**LINKING WITH THE CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE**

This project made an important contribution to demonstrating a child’s right to participate in the matters that affect them (Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child), and incorporated key elements of Learning for Sustainability by supporting pupils to explore their connection to the local environment. It produced a consensually agreed output for sharing with the wider community, and for which all pupils agreed made them feel proud of their place and contribution towards it.

Combined, the sessions incorporated the following Experiences and Outcomes:

**Early Years**
I explore and discover the interesting features of my local environment to develop an awareness of the world around me.
SOC 0-07a

I explore and appreciate the wonder of nature within different environments and have played a part in caring for the environment.
SOC 0-08a

By exploring my local community, I have discovered the different roles people play and how they can help.
SOC 0-16a

**Stage 1**
I can describe and recreate the characteristics of my local environment by exploring the features of the landscape.
SOC 1-07a

I can consider ways of looking after my school or community and can encourage others to care for their environment.
SOC 1-08a

Having explored the landscape of my local area, I can describe the various ways in which land has been used.
SOC 1-13a

Through activities in my local area, I have developed my mental map and sense of place. I can create and use maps of the area.
SOC 1-14a

I can contribute to a discussion of the difference between my needs and wants and those of others around me.
SOC 1-16a

By exploring the ways in which we use and need rules, I can consider the meaning of rights and
responsibilities and discuss those relevant to me.
SOC 1-17a

I have participated in decision making and have considered the different options available in order
to make decisions.
SOC 1-18a

Stage 2
I can discuss the environmental impact of human activity and suggest ways in which we can live in
a more environmentally-responsible way.
SOC 2-08a

I can consider the advantages and disadvantages of a proposed land use development and discuss
the impact this may have on the community.
SOC 2-08b

Having explored my local area, I can present information on different places to live, work and relax
and interesting places to visit.
SOC 2-10a

I can explain how the needs of a group in my local community are supported.
SOC 2-16a