

Survey of the impact of the Scrapstore PlayPod in Primary Schools



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This report was carried out by
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Scrapstore and Scrapstore PlayPods

**Please note that throughout
this document where the
PlayPod is referred to, it
means the Scrapstore PlayPod**

Contents

Section	Section number	Page Number
Executive Summary		3
Introduction	1	6
Scope of the report	2	7
Supporting Evidence for the Scrapstore PlayPod	5	8
Findings – Part One	7	9
Findings – Part Two		12
Question 1 - Findings	8	13
Question 2 - Findings	9	16
Question 3 - Findings	10	18
Question 4 - Findings	11	19
Question 5 - Findings	12	20
Question 6 - Findings	13	20
Question 7 - Findings	14	22
Conclusions	15	23-

Executive summary

Introduction

Children's Scrapstore in Bristol developed the PlayPod as an innovative idea that combined the benefits of different strands of their charitable objectives in making waste things play things. The idea behind it was inspirational in encompassing 'Every Child Matters' outcomes, where providers to children are charged with creating services to support children's development.

The PlayPod was designed to make the implementation of the recognised visions and objectives for play in schools a viable and exciting possibility and there are now Scrapstore PlayPods in over fifty schools across the UK.

Since its introduction to schools over the period of five years, a range of feedback has been received, which has predominantly described very positive changes in children, staff and the climate of the school in general.

The strength of the comments and the picture that was beginning to emerge from schools prompted this survey. If schools were reporting such good results, then more schools ought to know about it. The survey was therefore designed to establish, directly from Head Teachers, how the PlayPod had affected life in their schools and particularly, the impact on behaviour of children and staff.

This qualitative study may prompt further research to extend knowledge of its impact in a wider educational context. The scope of the project however will form the foundations for communicating the benefits of the PlayPod to the wider community, including schools and parents.

Findings

The findings have identified a number of areas where conventional patterns of children's behaviour has changed, by their own free will. In addition, it describes the effect on children as a result of this in terms of their well-being and on the school staff and day as a whole. In brief, these can be summarised as:

- Large-scale improvements in the level of inclusion between children who would previously have remained on the periphery for a variety of reasons
- Significant reductions in lunchtime incidents and accidents
- Better integration across year groups, generating confidence and developing esteem through helping each other and showing each other the way
- More integrated play between girls and boys, with a change in the footballing fraternity as the opportunities for outdoor play present themselves
- Improvements in behaviour and reduction in boredom and aggression
- More confident and motivated lunch time staff
- Happier children and staff in school
- Enhanced engagement in lessons
- Positive parent reactions



Conclusions

The responses gleaned through this survey are both qualitative and a rich source of evidence derived from factual recollections, observation and cumulative experience conveyed through the Head Teacher.

The striking feature of this survey was how consistent the responses were. Whilst we have not been able to represent them statistically, the validity of the results is to a large extent endorsed by the consistency and whilst there was variation in examples given and the way they were presented, the overall themes were echoed throughout and are considered to be reliable.

The body of evidence from this survey has presented an overwhelmingly positive impact of the Scrapstore PlayPod in the primary school to the extent that it could be argued that every primary school should have one.

The Scrapstore PlayPod has changed the behaviour of children at school quite voluntarily allowing the children to exercise more choice and independence, take greater risks, problem solve and have much more fun through imaginative and creative play.

The dramatic reduction in incidents at lunchtime, the breaking of stereotypes, setting of new boundaries and the readiness with which children engage with this programme has astonished some. This has invigorated some of the staff in their jobs, bringing new motivations and excitement about their work and its impact.



Head teachers have readily expressed a view that the learning that takes place in the playground translates to different and more receptive behaviour in the classroom. However, this has not been proven through hard measures; and presents an exciting opportunity to undertake further research to establish the link between children who are facilitated in creative and free play and their educational attainment, as well as contribution to class and receptiveness to learn.

The PlayPod is such a simple and relatively inexpensive solution to a difficult problem that has far-reaching effects for the child, its development and relationship to the world and its own community. It has helped children who are shy and nervous about joining others and included them, transforming them from being bystanders to active participants. It has seen boys and girls playing together more readily, dressing up, role-playing and has seen the return of some of the most staunch and enduring games children have played through the ages.

The behaviour and attitudes of lunchtime staff in particular, with a more defined philosophical and value driven approach to play has transformed the entire lunchtime experience for the whole school. This has its effect in the classroom, as children tend to be happier, more occupied, more sociable and more expressive. Inevitably, it must also affect the behaviour of children at home, with their parents, siblings and friends. Children who look forward to going to school and those who settle in and feel a sense of belonging more rapidly are two very tangible examples of where there will be implied benefits at home.



The findings of this report warrant further research, but as a standalone survey, should be convincing enough to galvanise local communities to insist that their school has one and ultimately influence policy on play in primary schools.

Parents of primary school children have far more of a tendency to form friendship groups and to share parenting duties to help each other out. They have an appetite for discussing and observing their own and other children's behaviour. Where the PlayPod is affecting children's lives, the entire community around the school will inadvertently be subject to those benefits.

It would be imprudent to conclude this report without recognising and paying gratitude to the Head Teachers and their staff for the commitment and hard work they have invested in making the programme work. This is, after all a programme of change, which for some has been quite transformational. Dealing with the multiple stakeholders and riding the storms associated with major change are all part of the job of being a Head Teacher, however, the enthusiasm, despite some of the challenges it has thrown up has been impressive and schools that have embarked on the programme appear to have succeeded in making it work for their school.

This has been with the help and support of the Children's Scrapstore PlayPod Team, who are recognised as experts in their field and are viewed as good teachers and facilitators as well as a reliable source of support and advice. Many comments were made about their work and how it had helped the transformation in attitudes. This means their work has been focussed absolutely in the right direction in a supportive manner. The only question relating to them concerns how much follow up they are able to provide in relation to what the school would really like to have. That is a very positive endorsement.

Finally, Children's Scrapstore would like to undertake further research in partnership with an academic institution to establish the impact on educational attainment as a result of the PlayPod. Furthermore, it is interested in the long-term impact on the child's development, particularly where they have had the benefit of the PlayPod for all or most of their primary school years.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Children's Scrapstore in Bristol developed the Scrapstore PlayPod, (in partnership with Bristol City Council, Bath & North East Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council), as an innovative idea that combined the benefits of different strands of their charitable objectives in making waste things play things. The idea behind it was inspirational in encompassing 'Every Child Matters' outcomes where providers to children are charged with creating services to support children's development within several distinct areas, being concerning safety, health, enjoyment, achievement and well-being.
- 1.2 There is a growing body of evidence and a developing policy framework to support the visions and objectives for children's play in the UK, and a variety of projects which attempt to capture these. The Scrapstore PlayPod was designed to make the implementation of these visions and objectives for play in schools a viable and exciting possibility.
- 1.3 Children's Scrapstore since the beginning of the PlayPod programme has observed the school environment before and after and received a random collection of feedback from schools, parents and children on the PlayPod and its benefits. These have been overwhelmingly positive. This however has mainly been anecdotal and it was felt that a more structured method for gathering the evidence and presenting the outcomes of the programme needed to be devised in order to communicate the benefits to a wider audience of schools and parents.
- 1.4 It was considered that the most effective method for achieving this was to seek information directly from Head Teachers about the impact of the PlayPod on their staff, children and school. There was no need to embark on new research in support of the concepts around play that supported the development of the Scrapstore PlayPod as there is already a solid body of knowledge and evidence based research to support this.
- 1.5 What Children's Scrapstore needed to know was:
 - Is the anecdotal evidence regarding the impact on children, staff and the school environment borne out consistently
 - Are there were any aspects of the service which give rise to concerns in respect of quality assurance
 - Are there any improvements that could be made to the Scrapstore PlayPod or the service associated with it
 - Were schools getting sufficient support through the programme
- 1.6 It was envisaged that the results of this survey would help Children's Scrapstore make refinements as well as provide them with a more solid basis on which to communicate the benefits to a wider audience in the future.

1 Scope of this report

- 1.1 This report set out to establish the impact of the PlayPod on the primary schools who had adopted it and had time to experience any changes as a result as in section 1.5.
- 1.2 It provides a brief explanation about the PlayPod and associated services as well as some of the current thinking that supports the concept of the PlayPod.
- 1.3 Conclusions from the survey will guide recommendations for future improvements and communications.
- 1.4 Finally, it will identify any other studies that may be useful as a result of the findings.

2 Methodology

- 2.1 A questionnaire was developed by the Children's Scrapstore Play Team and was e mailed to 41 schools asking if they would be prepared to participate in a telephone survey based upon the questionnaire.
- 2.2 An independent researcher was used to make contact with the Head Teachers and conduct the telephone survey
- 2.3 Head Teachers have very full days and are often involved in teaching or meetings. It was always anticipated that this would be a task that required persistence.
- 2.4 Out of the 41 schools approached, 20 telephone interviews were conducted with Head Teachers. The remaining respondents were persistently difficult to make direct communication with and the questionnaires were e-mailed a number of times asking for a response. Out of the 21 questionnaires e mailed out again, 3 returned a completed questionnaire
- 2.5 It was agreed that the survey should be analysed using the 23 responses available as this represented 56% of the total group surveyed.

3 What is the Scrapstore PlayPod?

- 3.1 The Scrapstore PlayPod is a programme supplying materials, training, mentoring and consultancy. It uses a purpose built playground structure in which to install a PlayPod filled with materials and equipment (loose parts) derived from industry, selected and supplied on a renewable basis to primary schools to stimulate, facilitate and enhance children's play. It is primarily a facility for children founded on a support programme for lunchtime supervisors, which also engages with all stakeholders within the school environment.
- 3.2 The PlayPod structure is usually situated in the playground and is opened during lunch times as well as during after school and holiday activities.
- 3.3 The PlayPod provides a fully accessible and controllable environment for children to play how they want to.



- 1.1 These elements lead to a high level of ownership by children which is a powerful ingredient in providing a positive play and learning experience for a child.
- 1.2 The vital ingredients for these experiences are loose parts: attractive flexible materials, which children can readily change, manipulate and control for themselves.
- 1.3 The Play Pod 'package' provides a site visit to assess the property and its space available for play, meeting staff and

parents to enhance awareness and understanding and initial mentoring and feedback to support installation and transition of lunch time activities and supervision requirements for professional training for lunch time supervisors

- 1.4 The PlayPod was designed with the benefit of a body of knowledge and research on Children and Play that ameliorated the level of risk associated with any new venture. It is now in over fifty schools in the UK and still growing.

2 Supporting Evidence for the Scrapstore PlayPod

- 2.1 It is known that the greater the range of experiences that are presented by a play environment the more children will naturally explore and learn. This is supported by an international framework in **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and by a National Charter for Children's Play (Play England)**.
- 2.2 Catherine Prisk, Joint Director of Play England, wrote the forward to the recent report for South Gloucestershire Council on 'Supporting School improvement through play' (Lester, Jones & Russell). She refers to the need for children to have adequate space and time to play throughout their childhood, and the increasingly structured out of school lives and changes in work life balance of many families which have limited the freedoms that previous generations could have taken for granted.
- 2.3 She goes on to say that the fear of crime and antisocial activities have conspired to deny children the choice to play outside to the degree that they tell us they want to and the evidence tells us they need to. Children need the opportunity to play with friends, in teams and within different environments to develop their confidence and schools have the opportunity to provide this during lunchtimes. However, there is growing evidence that this important part of the school day is being significantly eroded.
- 2.4 The Scrapstore PlayPod provides the opportunity for Schools to make lunchtimes a different experience for children and staff and is based upon the body of evidence that supports the notion that children are happier, more sociable and learn more when they are given time to play with the opportunity for self-expression through free and creative play outdoors.

3 Reporting on the Findings

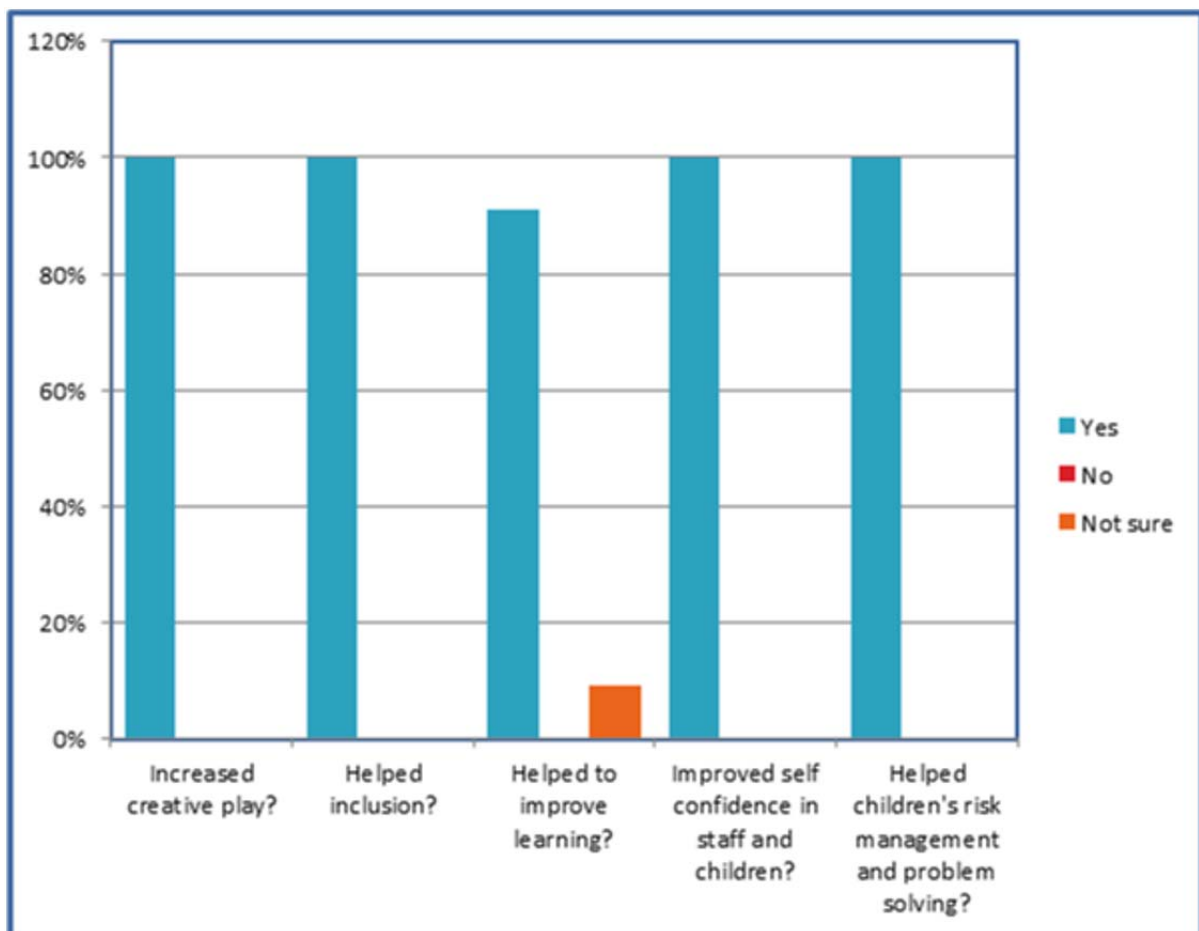
- 3.1 The questionnaire (Appendix 1) comprises two parts. The first asks eight questions requiring a Yes/No answer and these are reported separately from the remaining seven questions where Head Teachers were given the opportunity to provide a free ranging response.

1.1 Responses to the open questions are detailed and collated under each specific question. The responses, whilst all very individual, had significant consistency in what they reported for the purposes of analysis of such qualitative data. Themes have been identified and collated together.

2 Findings – Part One

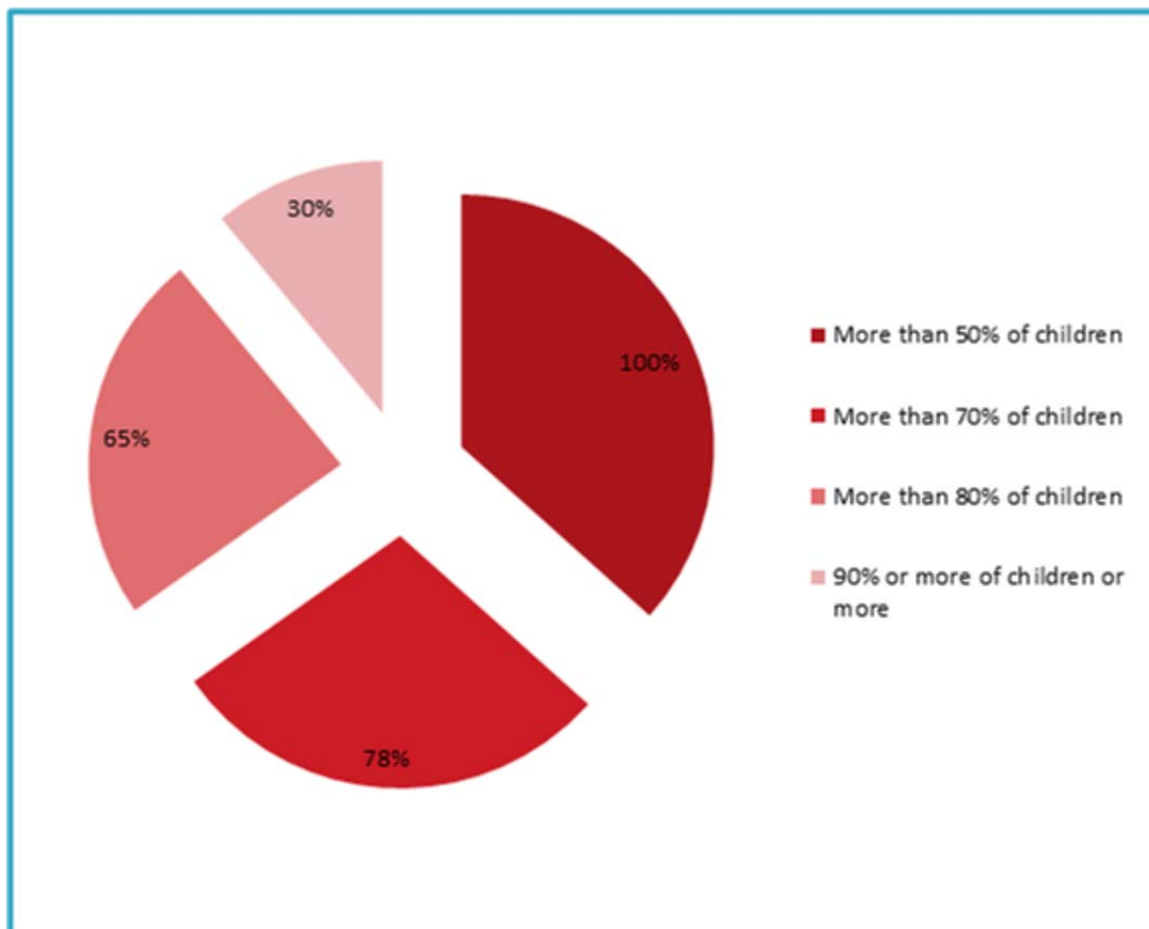
2.1 The first set of questions were direct questions requiring a yes/no answer. As can be seen in Fig 1, the results suggest an across the board endorsement in relation to all of these questions, except that relating to whether learning had improved. None of the respondents answered 'no' to this question, saying that they would like more time to observe this or that they were unsure because they had not been able to undertake any measurement of this in a controlled way. The question was also construed differently across the respondents, some considering learning in the classroom alone and others on a wider basis, which included the playground. Despite this, the result remains significantly high.

Fig 1: Shows the response to questions concerning the effect on children & staff



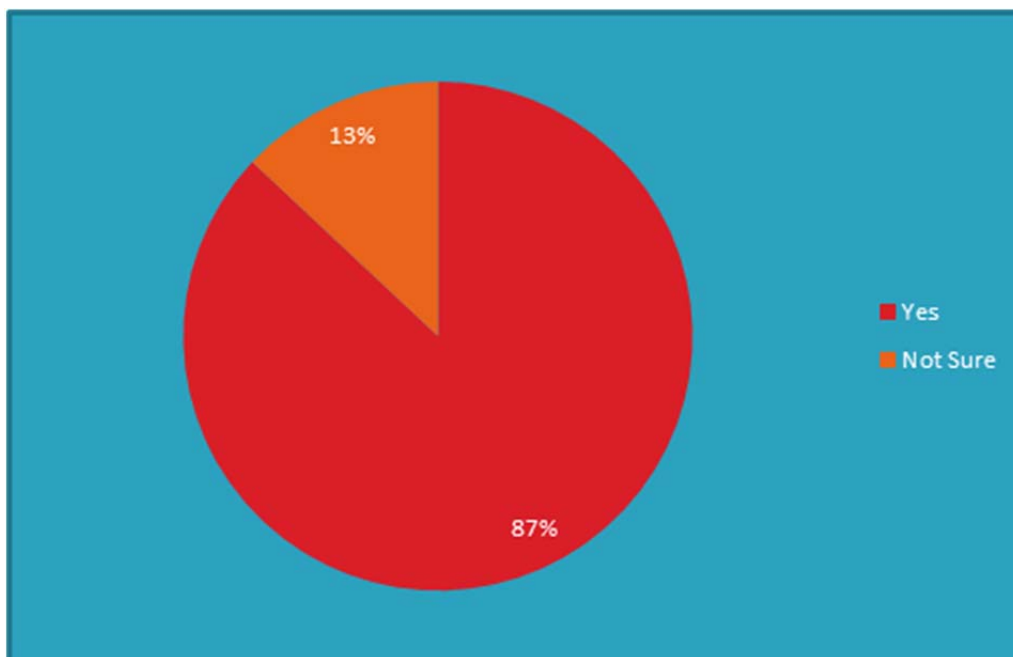
- 1.1 Some emphasis was given to the 'yes' response, expressed as 'definitely', or 'absolutely'. The same response about inclusion is very encouraging and further explanation is provided in the more open questions in the report.
- 1.2 The survey was keen to know what proportion of children were playing with the PlayPod at lunch times. Again, responses to this question varied, as it was dependent upon the weather and also, the space available for children. Where this could accommodate both footballers and the PlayPod, then it appeared that this could vary quite considerably from day to day. We were however able to gather evidence as shown in Fig 2. The results demonstrate that the majority of children will play with the PlayPod for some of the time, and that, on average, 77% of children will be playing with the PlayPod at any given time.

Fig 2: Shows the proportion of children playing with the PlayPod at lunch time expressed as a percentage



1.1 The question 'Is the PlayPod good value for money?' was answered without hesitation by the majority of respondents. Those who deliberated over the response expressed concerns about the cost and asked further questions about whether there were any changes that could be made to bring the cost down. The budgets for schools have been squeezed as have all other public sector organisations and this has affected the take up of the PlayPod. A number of schools have sought and been successful in applying for grant funding to support the purchase, however some ideas were proposed and they are contained within **section 11**. The issue of cost was difficult for some respondents to separate from that of value and there were a number who responded to the question initially with a 'no' because of the cost, subsequently changing their response when asked to think about whether it had bought value to the school. All respondents ultimately, were able to identify that it had bought changes that were valuable.

Figure 3: Is the PlayPod good value for money?



Part 2



1 Question 1: Are there any individual children you can think of on whom the Scrapstore PlayPod has had a particular impact?

- 1.1 The responses to this question could be categorised into three main themes. Most of the schools gave more than one answer, moreover they were consistent enough to be categorised in this manner.
- 1.2 Theme one was concerned with **CHILDREN WHO ROUTINELY GET INTO TROUBLE**, either through being aggressive or generally too rough, or out of boredom could not think of anything better to do. Findings are as follows:
 - 1.2.1 *Some individual examples were cited of children who were known to be rough or aggressive and would wander around looking for trouble. Others comments were of a more general nature describing children, who, out of boredom were found 'wandering about, getting into trouble' not knowing what to occupy themselves with. One school said that this had completely stopped and that den building had been instrumental in this as this had captured children's imagination and absorbed them.*
 - 1.2.2 *A child was described as having initially used the scrap to hit other children and this changed after a short while where the play with scrap became more cooperative. Reference was made several times to the scrap on scrap policy and how this had transformed what had previously been aggression from and between children, enabling children to play fight in a safer and more constructive way.*
 - 1.2.3
 - 1.2.4 **"We have a child in Year 2 who is always in trouble during playtimes due to rough play. Since the arrival of the Scrapstore PlayPod, his behaviour has improved massively. He plays more positively with other children making large structures out of scrap. He is rarely in trouble now and is 100% engaged in play."**
- 1.3 Theme Two was concerned with **INCLUSION / INTEGRATION** and describes the impact on two distinctly different groups who benefitted. The first concerned children how children who traditionally had found it difficult to engage, either because they had communication difficulties, learning difficulties, speech difficulties or whose demeanour was very shy and/or solitary. Over 50% of the schools made reference to this particular impact of the Scrapstore PlayPod.
- 1.4 The second group referred to children in respect of the year groups, who normally confined their play to their peers from their own class or year. In these circumstances, children in reception or newcomers to the school may take some time to integrate as their play is mostly confined to other children new to the school. The PlayPod has been seen to break these boundaries and encouraged children quite naturally to playing across year groups. The findings are as follows:

- 1.1.1 *A variety of examples were given of children who were more integrated into play activities, more prepared to mix and talk more with other children, including other years and not just their peers. Children were described by one head teacher as clustering around activities rather than groups of friends. This was described in different ways with the overall message that it was breaking down some of the barriers to integration and enabling children to become more sociable. One comment stated, "Quiet kids can also enjoy themselves".*
- 1.1.2 *The feedback generally suggested that those who stood on the periphery and previously did not engage with play activities were either missing out or did not fit into place in the way that bolder children were able to. This could affect confidence and draw attention in the wrong way to the child. The term more "comfortable with their own confidence" was used which seemed to encapsulate this particular feature. Children with behavioural difficulties were described by another Head as "socialising more and are better occupied."*
- 1.2 The Buddy Scheme, in integral part of the PlayPod programme was seen to have helped inclusion, and whilst this could be through a structured process, it also was described as happening quite naturally, where older children would help younger children and show them the way.
- 1.3 Children's confidence and self-esteem was also judged to have improved through the Buddy scheme; only in this case, it was the older children who were seen to benefit more from taking the responsibility for setting examples and building their self-esteem through doing so.

"We have a large extended family in the school who kept themselves to themselves. Since the Scrapstore PlayPod, the children are a lot more engaged. It has impacted on their learning and has made a noticeable difference"

- 1.3.1 *New children and those in Reception were deemed to be able to integrate better because there was something tangible and exciting to latch onto that did not exclude them. The Scrapstore PlayPod was described by a number of schools as having accelerated the 'settling in' process for new children because there were better opportunities to relate to their peers and therefore familiarise themselves with school life more readily.*

"Children can mix more because they don't have to know the rules of the game, they can join in".



- 1.4 Theme three was concerned with **BREAKING STEREOTYPICAL BOUNDARIES** and how the Scrapstore PlayPod had facilitated a shift from conventional boy and girl play activities as well as gender exclusive play.

- 1.1 This section bought out a number of very good examples, however, the predominant group referred to, were the 'footballers'. Prior to the introduction of the PlayPod in the primary schools, a group of children, predominantly boys would automatically play football. This was described as dominating the playtime in terms of claiming space the children took for play activities. It did seem from some of the descriptions given, that the footballers came top of a self-made pecking order and that this may have encouraged isolation of some of the other children. It was a double edge sword, as without football, the levels of boredom would have been greater and with that, there may well have been a sharp rise in the associated incidents and aggressive behaviour. The impact of the PlayPod had not stopped football, but seems to have enticed some of the previous diehards to different types of play, with other children who they would not have previously played with. Some of these were older boys too where 'play' as it might have been regarded, may not have seemed so 'cool'.
- 1.2 The den making , working with ropes and creation of other large constructions has managed to replace the 'macho' football with a another type of 'just as cool' play with a more creative element, still retaining the need to work as teams. The team, however, being much more of a mix of gender and years.

“Year 6 children are more imaginative and have recaptured play as they would have known it when they were younger, for example, Knights and Princesses have been rediscovered”

- 1.3 Reference was made to older boys again in the observation of year 6 boys dressing up and engaging in role-play. This was happening through the child's own choice.
- 1.4 Children of both genders were seen to be engaging in role-playing, creating doctors surgeries etc, something that was described as 'rarely seen'.

“Overnight, different year groups started to play together!”

- 1.5 A further observation about boys was that boisterous boys no longer stopped the girls from playing. The scrap on scrap policy had created fantastic boundaries that meant girls could participate in rougher play with boys without being overwhelmed by their physicality.



1 How has the Scrapstore PlayPod affected school life since it opened?

- 1.1 Again, it was possible to identify common themes from the results of the survey and these have been categorised into two main sections.
- 1.2 The first theme revolved around **EXCITEMENT AND ENTHUSIASM** that the Scrapstore PlayPod had generated about lunchtimes initially but then crossing over into greater motivation for coming to school and enthusiasm about the school more generally. Findings are as follows:
- 1.2.1 *Out of the 23 schools who responded to the survey, 17 made some comment about enthusiasm and excitement, generated by the increase in creativity, less boredom and more to do. Creative play was seen as being enhanced and play was altogether more positive. The atmosphere around playtimes had changed where children were keen and excited about the PlayPod opening. This was manifested in the children wanting to go out to play.*
- 1.2.2 *One school had piloted the PlayPod and described the children's reactions when it was removed as very sad, commenting that when it returned on a permanent basis, there was great excitement and anticipation.*
- 1.2.3 *Three schools referred to surveys with the Children and the PlayPod was always given a positive mention. Creativity was mentioned also in this section in relation to capturing imagination and the joys and benefits of unstructured play. The children could make anything of it and would harness innovative and imaginative ideas. Some of the Heads expressed their amazement at the endless variety of play derived from the scrap and were impressed that the children did not seem to tire of it.*
- “In one of the school surveys, where children were asked what they wanted more of, the answer was ‘Play Pods.’”**
- 1.2.4 *Two of the participating schools had experienced reticence from parents initially and had spent some time dealing with their concerns, which revolved mostly around safety. One of the schools recalled that climbing trees was an issue to start with and there were a number of accidents, which gave rise to parental concerns about the level of supervision. However, the situation became more controlled and the PlayPod was now accepted as being a good thing and the school had managed to raise confidence in parents about how they were dealing with safety issues.*
- 1.2.5 *The increased enjoyment was not confined to children. A number of schools referred to the impact on Lunchtime supervisors, and this is covered in more detail in section 12. Lunchtimes were described as far more enjoyable for children as well as staff. Comments such as the following were representative of this:*
- Lunch time is part of the school day now
 - Lunch time supervisors are much happier now
 - Kids look forward to lunch times
 - Staff have been reorganised, they feel more skilled and enthused. Play times are more focussed and enjoyable, every child is doing something.
 - Lunchtime is more worthwhile now

1.1.1 *Some schools had rearranged lunch times, reorganised the space and restructured staffing to facilitate play all of which had a positive outcome and none of which would probably have happened without the prompt of the PlayPod. This extended to after school clubs and stay and play sessions too.*

1.2 The third theme under this question was the **IMPACT ON CHILDRENS BEHAVIOUR, LEARNING AND THE AFTERNOON.**

1.2.1 *One of the measures the Head Teachers were able to use was the number of incidents they would normally expect to have to deal with in the afternoon after lunch as a result of bad behaviour. Although this was anecdotal as they had not been asked to provide statistics prior to the interview, many of them were able to report a reduction.*

“Incidents have fallen – there used to be ten children lined up at the head’s door after lunch, now we will go for days without seeing a child in this way”

1.2.2 *The improvements in behaviour were put down to greater opportunities to express creativity. The effect of improved behaviour was ventured by some to have had an impact on concentration and receptiveness in the classroom after lunch and even more encouraging a different dimension to the learning environment. This was described in a number of statements:*

- Demonstrates untapped potential which may not be seen in the classroom
- Crosses over into lesson time
- Raises expectations for learning
- Children more willing to work in the afternoon
- Conflict resolution has improved
- Teamwork has improved
- Gives the kids a chance to shine in an unstructured environment
- Fewer play incidents – none related to boredom,
- Children more settled
- Willing to work in the afternoon.

“We used to spend ages working out strategies for conflict resolution, this now happens naturally”

1.2.3 *One head described the use of ropes, crates and the creation of a forest environment in the school led to a natural transfer of skills and learning resources into the classroom.*

2 Some schools had rearranged lunch times, reorganised the space and restructured staffing to Question 3: What is the best thing about the Scrapstore PlayPod?

- 2.1 The best thing about the Scrapstore PlayPod featured themes relating to creativity and variety, quality of play, and integration.
- 2.2 **CREATIVITY AND VARIETY** referred to the variety and range of materials and of play activities, described as a constant source of amazement.

2.2.1 *New scrap encouraged new games and the opportunity to be creative and innovative. The element of choice gave children freedom that some of them had never experienced before and created equality about play, allowing them to socially mix as equals.*

2.2.2 *The knowledge that the play materials are not precious in a monetary sense and it doesn't matter whether the scrap gets broken contributes to the fun; as does the fact that it can be turned into anything the children want it to be. They can make of it what they want was reported by a number of the participants, being able to use it in most weathers. Foundation and reception children were reported as really benefitting from outdoor learning.*

- 2.3 **QUALITY OF PLAY** was also described as being much improved.

2.3.1 *A number of participants were very enthusiastic in this section, reporting the joy of hearing laughter and listening to children play together as an indication of improved quality of play. The children were happier and getting on together better.*

1.1.1 *Lunch times had become enjoyable again because fun had been introduced. Children were described as extremely active and more creative. Use of language as part of an imaginary role was observed where children would mimic or portray a different persona as part of their play.*

“The best thing about the Scrapstore PlayPod is watching children doing mad things with joy”



- 2.4 **INTEGRATION OF KIDS** was raised again under the question about the best thing about the Scrapstore PlayPod. This has been reported in section 9, however these additional comments add to the flavour of the feedback.

- Kids learn to mingle and mix
- Integration of older and younger children playing together creatively
- All children are included in imaginative play
- Open ended and inclusive

“No need for the newest this and that, they are in there making a pirate ship”

1 Question 4: Is there any way we could improve the Scrapstore PlayPod?

- 1.1 Some of the schools had not yet had the Scrapstore PlayPod for a whole year and felt it was early days to be making suggestions. However, the question prompted a varied response with some interesting suggestions.
- 1.1.1 *The type of scrap and replenishments were raised by a number of schools. The quality of scrap is seen to be very important and the need to find durable items. The refills are anticipated with positivity as towards the end of a refill, some schools felt that the children might start to tire of it and start to wield the materials against each other as they have exhausted their particular games with it. The re-stocks every term was viewed as important. This was in contrast to some who commented that the children never tire of it as they have endless imagination to be able to turn it into different things. However, as the materials deteriorate or break, it is not difficult to see why new stock creates new and more vibrant play ideas.*
 - 1.1.2 *Cost was raised by three schools who suggested that the price should be reduced. It was suggested that Children's Scrapstore should create a network of shed builders so that the price of the PlayPod becomes more competitive. Even though these schools thought it was too expensive, they still believed that generally, it was good value for money.*
 - 1.1.3 *There was a request for the PlayPod to be mobile so that they could move it through the year*
 - 1.1.4 *A request was made for more den making materials as this was clearly far above the popularity of much of the other stock and was raised repeatedly as something the children loved to do.*
 - 1.1.5 *Segregating wet and dry materials from each other was a further suggestion*
 - 1.1.6 *Social networking was raised as a way of bringing schools together in a forum where ideas and discussions could be exchanged.*
 - 1.1.7 *The need for a system to alert Children's Scrapstore about potential or discovered hazards was felt to be important so that a quick alert could go to all schools.*
 - 1.1.8 *Follow up and after care service was also raised by some schools. Consistently the training programme and mentoring was given massive thumbs up. Schools had found this a landmark event in terms of changing attitudes for staff, both teachers and lunchtime supervisors. It had the effect of making play something very special and something about which they could be proud. In order to keep the inspiration going and to remind staff of the benefits of creative play and the way it can be handled with the Scrapstore PlayPod was seen as important in making sure it did not become just 'another thing'.*
 - 1.1.9 *Scrapstore staff were held in high regard with no exceptions. There was no question relating to this and it voluntarily cropped up in the feedback without prompting. Follow up was seen as critical in helping to get staff on board, as was the mentoring to help staff through the transitional change. Training was described on several occasions as exceptional or fantastic.*

1 Question 5: What difference has the Scrapstore PlayPod made to lunchtime at your school?

The answers to this question backed up the responses to the previous questions, particularly in relation to the **LUNCHTIME EXPERIENCE**, in particular, reducing boredom, children being actively involved, happier children, football frenzied lunch times and decreased incidents. It is worth mentioning the comments that support further the themes that have already been raised:

- Lunchtime is a whole experience
- Kids can switch off for an hour ...and have more fun
- More harmonious, exciting , enjoyable and happy
- We really value play time at school now
- Happier playground and field
- Calmed things down
- Not having to be reactive, can stand back a bit more
- Nothing to focus on before
- Far less telling tales to deliberately get other Children into trouble



2 Question 6: Can you give any other examples of where staff and children's behaviour has changed as a result of Scrapstore PlayPod?

2.1 Responses to this question had similar themes again, concerned with the **CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR AND SKILL LEVELS OF LUNCHTIME STAFF** and subsequently confidence levels.

2.1.1 *The PlayPod was described by one school as having a 'huge' impact on staff, making them more enthused, motivated and positive. This in turn reinforced their role and value within the school and gave teachers and others greater confidence in them as part of the team as a whole. Furthermore, the investment by the school in accredited training reinforced their value to the school and this had engendered pride in doing their job well. The opportunity this had created for team building was commented upon by a number of the schools.*

“For staff it has been one of the key drivers in getting a shared dialogue about learning”

2.1.2 *The role of lunchtime supervisor was described as having evolved as a policing role and one that had been converted to a 'facilitator' role through the introduction of play as a different concept, giving the staff a greater degree of independence. Again, this was related to the training provided by the Children's Scrapstore Play Team that had transformed thinking about the importance and role of play and how this could be best approached to support the PlayPod.*

- 1.1.1 *Lunchtime staff were regarded as more relaxed, more resilient and more communicative with children. As a result, play is seen as being better facilitated. They were also observed to be actively engaged with the children more in play.*
- 1.1.2 *Attitudes towards risk had changed and although schools commented that this transformative process could take time and management, it was worth it in that children were permitted to take the lead and with the support of lunch time staff, learn to assess risk better for themselves and help other children do the same.*

***“We had just recruited new staff that watched and said
“You can’t do that”. It makes you realise how far your own
staff have come in that they see risk taking as normal”***

- 1.1.3 *Caution was expressed by another school who described the level of concern at first because of the risk averse culture that has become associated with schools. One head said “It could have been a disaster” and that Governors had to be convinced that children needed to learn to manage themselves. Making this link with Governors and teaching staff seems to be critical at the outset as part of the implementation of the PlayPod. Head Teachers with the support of Children’s Scrapstore Play team attempt to anticipate the likely responses, developing strategies to offset them. Having had a number of comments around this topic, none of the respondents reported a situation where the transformation had not been successful, although some were in the early days.*
- 1.1.4 *The transition has presented varying levels of challenge for the school, however, the change that the PlayPod requires in thinking does require a change in behaviour of some of the staff and this should not be underestimated. The training has been described as hugely important in supporting the change.*

***“Old habits die hard, you still have to facilitate the change to
make sure it lasts”***

- 1.1.5 *The suggestion of a regular follow up by the Children’s Scrapstore Play Team is given some context by this. Nervousness was expressed by some about wanting to avoid losing the impetus and changes brought about by the PlayPod and their concerns would be allayed by the prospect of follow up visits and training updates for the lunchtime staff.*

1.2 **GENERAL CHANGES IN CHILDREN’S BEHAVIOUR**, along with the above was reported as producing a cumulative improvement in team working and school life generally. The impact on specific children has largely been covered in previous questions; however, there were a number of general responses that endorse these.

- 1.2.1 *Lunch times were regarded as calmer and more relaxed, although they could still be ‘manic’ in terms of play activity.*
- 1.2.2 *Children were described as solving things for themselves and consequently the nature of interventions by the lunchtime staff had changed to a more positive communication and social relationship with the children.*

- 1.1.1 *Children's expectations of themselves had changed and as a result of this and the change in relationship with the lunchtime staff, more sharing was evident, greater resilience and not so many arguments.*
- 1.1.2 *The impact of the lunch time culture change , kids having fun, staff enjoying their jobs more, feeling valued and the vast diversity of creative expression have , it was suggested, found their way into the whole school day. Staff have been able to use this to enhance teaching.*
- 1.1.3 *The enjoyment even extended to putting the scrap away, particularly by the younger children. The older years had to be encouraged more to do this. Similarly, there were rally cries in anticipation of it opening at lunchtime, which could become quite competitive.*

14 Question 7: Do you believe that it has impacted on the level of behaviour that would have been described as bullying.

- 14.1.1 *By far the biggest response to this question was that bullying was not normally a problem . Most of the schools had a strategy in place and it rarely arose. One head commented that "it was not endemic and not connected with play, although children being more occupied can help" In response to this question several comments were made about the impact on lunch time incidents at school and the reduced queue after lunch at the head teachers door.*
- 14.1.2 *Less aggressive behaviour was attributed to the PlayPod partly put down to the changes in social barriers for children through play allowing them to invite others in thereby reducing aggressive behaviour.*
- 14.1.3 *Children were play fighting using the boundaries of 'scrap on scrap' which some reported as very helpful, although one school said that this had to be watched carefully so that older children in particular did not use scrap to hit other children with and it needed to be managed to ensure it did not get out of hand.*
- 14.1.4 *The reduction of boredom was also cited as being very influential in reducing situations where bullying may occur.*



1 Conclusions

- 1.1 The responses gleaned through this survey are both qualitative and a rich source of evidence derived from factual recollections, observation and cumulative experience conveyed through the Head Teacher.
- 1.2 The striking feature of this survey was how consistent the responses were. Whilst we have not been able to represent them statistically, the validity of the results is to a large extent endorsed by the consistency and whilst there was variation in examples given and the way they were presented, the overall themes were echoed throughout and are considered to be reliable.
- 1.3 The body of evidence from this survey has presented an overwhelmingly positive impact of the Scrapstore PlayPod in the primary school to the extent that it could be argued that every primary school should have one.
- 1.4 The Scrapstore PlayPod has changed the behaviour of children at school quite voluntarily allowing the children to exercise more choice and independence, take greater risks, problem solve and have much more fun through imaginative and creative play.
- 1.5 The dramatic reduction in incidents at lunchtime, the breaking of stereotypes, setting of new boundaries and the readiness with which children engage with this programme has astonished some. This has invigorated some of the staff in their jobs, bringing new motivations and excitement about their work and its impact.
- 1.6 Head teachers have readily expressed a view that the learning that takes place in the playground translates to different and more receptive behaviour in the classroom. However, this has not been proven through hard measures; and presents an exciting opportunity to undertake further research to establish the link between children who are facilitated in creative and free play and their educational attainment, as well as contribution to class and receptiveness to learn.
- 1.7 The PlayPod is such a simple and relatively inexpensive solution to a difficult problem that has far-reaching effects for the child, its development and relationship to the world and its own community.
- 1.8 It has helped children who are shy and nervous about joining others and included them, transforming them from being bystanders to active participants. It has seen boys and girls playing together more readily, dressing up, role-playing and has seen the return of some of the most staunch and enduring games children have played through the ages.
- 1.9 The behaviour and attitudes of lunchtime staff in particular, with a more defined philosophical and value driven approach to play has transformed the entire lunchtime experience for the whole school. This has its effect in the classroom, as children tend to be happier, more occupied, more sociable and more expressive.
- 1.10 Inevitably, it must also affect the behaviour of children at home, with their parents, siblings and friends. Children who look forward to going to school and those who settle in and feel a sense of belonging more rapidly are two very tangible examples of where there will be implied benefits at home.
- 1.11 The findings of this report warrant further research, but as a standalone survey, should be convincing enough to galvanise local communities to insist that their school has one and ultimately influence policy on play in primary schools.

- 1.1 Parents of primary school children have far more of a tendency to form friendship groups and to share parenting duties to help each other out. They have an appetite for discussing and observing their own and other children's behaviour. Where the PlayPod is affecting children's lives, the entire community around the school will inadvertently be subject to those benefits.
- 1.2 It would be imprudent to conclude this report without recognising and paying gratitude to the Head Teachers and their staff for the commitment and hard work they have invested in making the programme work. This is, after all a programme of change, which for some has been quite transformational. Dealing with the multiple stakeholders and riding the storms associated with major change are all part of the job of being a Head Teacher, however, the enthusiasm, despite some of the challenges it has thrown up has been impressive and schools that have embarked on the programme appear to have succeeded in making it work for their school.
- 1.3 This has been with the help and support of the Children's Scrapstore PlayPod Team, who are recognised as experts in their field and are viewed as good teachers and facilitators as well as a reliable source of support and advice. Many comments were made about their work and how it had helped the transformation in attitudes. This means their work has been focussed absolutely in the right direction in a supportive manner. The only question relating to them concerns how much follow up they are able to provide in relation to what the school would really like to have. That is a very positive endorsement.
- 1.4 Finally, Children's Scrapstore would like to undertake further research in partnership with an academic institution to establish the impact on educational attainment as a result of the PlayPod. Furthermore, it is interested in the long-term impact on the child's development, particularly where they have had the benefit of the PlayPod for all or most of their primary school years.

