

Workshop 5 - Play - where learning happens!

Upstart Scotland team

Why play, as the means of learning for our youngest pupils, is vital for the outcome of the future health, success and wellbeing of our nation. Ten years on from the publication of Building the Curriculum 2, we will discuss the reasons for play and its benefits to our pupils' development, a look at the underpinning pedagogy behind this approach and how it has been implemented in a local school. This workshop will support the development of Play in any Early Years classroom but will be of interest to all practitioners as it deals with the development of an inquiring mind.

Sue Palmer, a former Primary Headteacher in the Borders, is a literacy specialist, writer, presenter and 'childhood campaigner'. She has written over 250 books, software packages and TV programmes for schools on aspects of literacy (notably on grammar and spelling) and many hundreds of articles for the educational and national press. Over the last 10 years, her books on child development in the modern world - notably Toxic Childhood (second edition 2015) - have led to frequent media appearances and comments about dangers in children's lifestyles. Her latest book, Upstart: the case for raising the school starting age and what the under-sevens really need, was published in 2016. Sue chaired the Scottish Play Commission, served on the Scottish Government's Early Years Task Force and currently chairs the Upstart Scotland Campaign.

Kate Johnston worked in schools in several areas of Scotland, mainly as an infant teacher, before returning to study under an inspirational teacher, Sheena Johnstone, thereafter working as a nursery teacher while being involved in the development of after school clubs, looking at the needs of the under 5's in Leith and working with other professionals, volunteers and parents to further these aims. As a lifelong trade union member, Kate has spoken at conference on the benefits of nursery education and of a highly qualified workforce. Since retiring and joining the Upstart campaign, she has been delighted to witness the enthusiasm of practitioners to embrace play in the early years.

Martine Leitch, a Deputy Head in Glasgow, has recently been working closely with Primary Practitioners to "transform the Primary 1 curriculum", to connect pedagogy, policy and research to promote creativity and inquiry. Martine was previously seconded to the University of Strathclyde on both the undergraduate and postgraduate initial teaching education programmes and has developed several human rights education courses for both newly-qualified teachers and senior leaders. Her time teaching in both New Zealand and Malawi has greatly contributed to her commitment to participation rights for children and young people and led her to working closely with a wide range of non-government organisations such as WOSDEC and UNICEF.