



# Diagnosis of Play Settings

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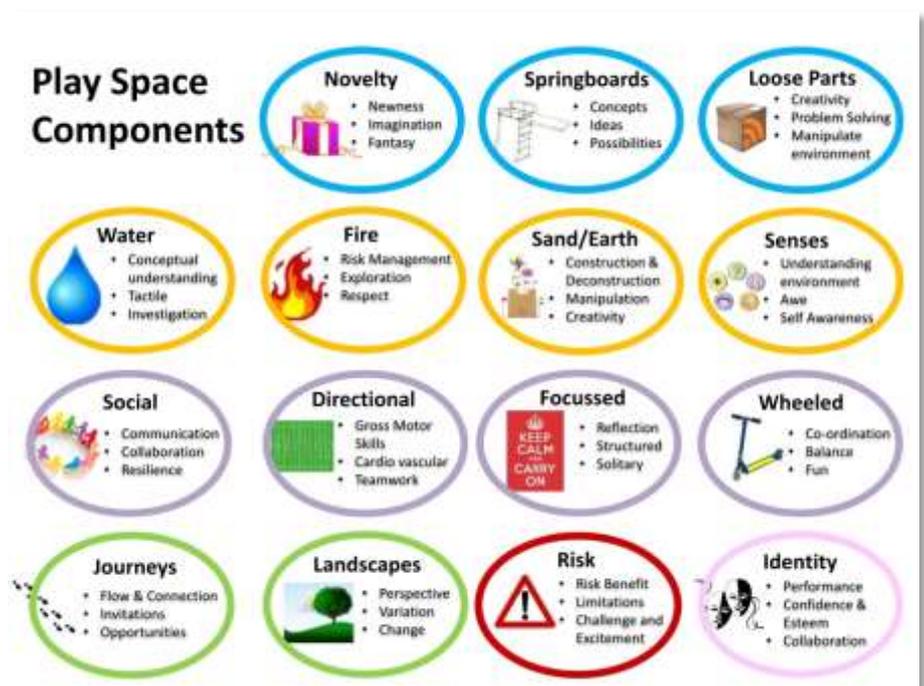
The Play Team at Children’s Scrapstore has spent the last seven years supporting primary schools and early years settings with their play, making suggestions about logistics and grounds development. From our observations, settings that have invested in increasing children’s choices for play, seems to have profound effects on how happy children are in school which then in turn has multiple benefits for the entire community.

The assessment framework has stemmed from the acknowledgment that schools need additional support and guidance in the planning and development of their playgrounds. The intention is to offer a non-bias service that helps settings assess the play value of their setting and support decisions in the development of their grounds; maximising on current resources and improving the quality of play opportunities and choices available.

The process involves a mapping exercise identifying what types of play are currently catered for as well as identifying what types of play or aspects of environment are missing. Its aim is to observe what the environment affords and what areas need attention to improve the quality of play on offer.

This assessment framework is based around two widely accepted and acclaimed methodologies: Play Wales' The First Claim and Simply Play. Both of these give a framework to assess the quality of what is being provided and experienced and focus on the quality of the play value of a space. Scrapstore have adapted these to make them relevant to useful to educational settings.

<http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/firstclaim>  
<http://d1887160.a22.zeun.co.uk/wp/index.php/history/>



Scrapstore Assessment Framework

**Note: Due to density and flow of children during school lunchtimes fire is not being considered as part of the assessment**

# La Verrière

**Name of Setting:** *La Verrière*

**Time & Date of Visit:** 2 – 4pm 1<sup>st</sup> July

**Number of children (capacity):** 9 (25)

**Number of Staff:** 2

**Age range of Children:** 4 -11 Years

**Organisation:** *la Ligue de l'enseignement*

We visited the site on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> July which coincided with a heatwave so temperatures were around 40 Celsius. In accordance with French law children are not allowed to play outside in education settings if temperatures exceed 36 Celsius so subsequently we were unable to observe any play outside on this visit.

During our observation there were nine children on site supported by two staff. The children had different activities on offer but all the children did them together and then changed when everyone had finished. This gave a very structured feeling to the play that was offered there. Despite this the children all seemed engaged and focussed on the different choices offered.

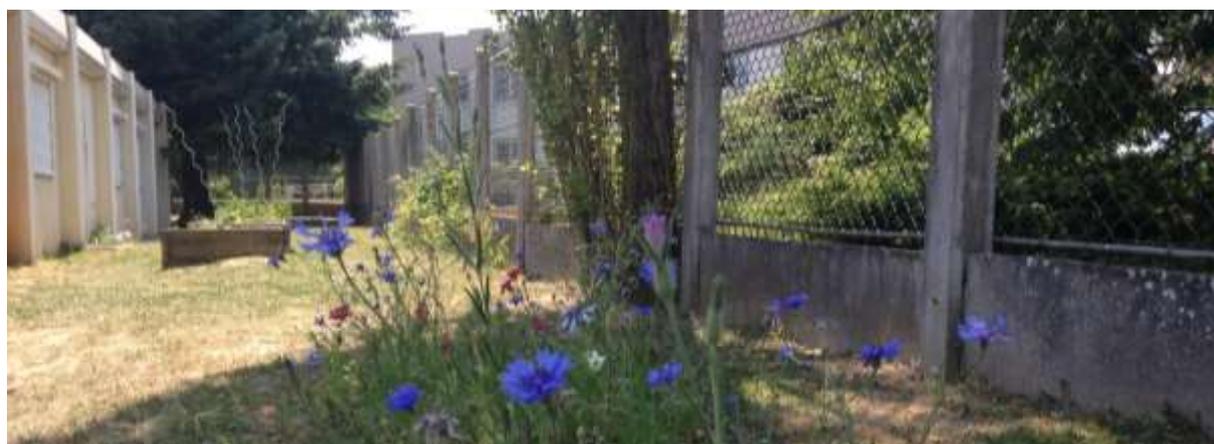
The outdoor space showed some evidence that it was used regularly by the children.

**La Verrière Assessment Chart**



	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Physical Environment</b>	1				
<b>Novelty:</b> Offers newness, change and engagement	1				
<b>Springboards:</b> Provide starting points, concepts, ideas & possibilities	1				
<b>Loose parts:</b> Give opportunity for creativity, problem solving & changing environments	1				
<b>Water:</b> Enables sensory experiences, conceptual understanding & investigation	1				
<b>Fire:</b> Creates sensory experiences, risk management, exploration & respect	1				
<b>Sand/Earth:</b> Provides sensory experience, construction and deconstruction, & creativity	1				
<b>Senses: Sight – Touch – Taste – Smell – Sound</b> Sets the scene for experimentation and exploration of the environment enabling understanding and a sense of awe.	1				
<b>Social Spaces:</b> Enables opportunities for communication, collaboration & relationships	1				
<b>Open Spaces:</b> Gross motor skills, cardio vascular, freedom, teamwork & possibility	1				
<b>Focussed Spaces:</b> Creates space for reflection, structured and solitary activity & fine motor skills	1				
<b>Wheeled Space:</b> Offers Co-ordination, balance risk and skill	1				
<b>Journeys:</b> Enables flow and connection, imitations/opportunities, variation and ways of moving	1				
<b>Landscapes:</b> Creates perspective, variation seasonal change, materials and possibility.	1				
<b>Risk:</b> Provides benefit, learning limits, challenge, excitement & resilience	1				
<b>Identity:</b> Creates opportunity for self-expression, performance, confidence and self-esteem	1				

**Scoring:**  
 0 = poor quality or non-existent  
 1 = low quality or few opportunities  
 2 = satisfactory quality or number of opportunities  
 3 = Good quality or variety of opportunities  
 4 = excellent quality or wide variety of opportunity



# Diagnosis

From the assessment the overall score was quite low, although assessing a space without seeing it with children and adults can alter the assessment significantly as the adults may have changed the space significantly. Two factors that the setting were stronger on were:

**Senses** were numerous and varied around the site. The large mature trees offered shade, nice sounds and a general sense of awe. There were also things to pick up, eat and smell around the site.



**Journeys** around this space although not formalised were rich. The circular nature of the site and its small size gave it great potential for playful journeys.



There were a number of aspects that looked like they could be improved which would improve the play value of the site these were:

- Novelty
- Springboards
- Water
- Loose parts
- Identity
- Wheeled spaces

Journeys and landscapes could be easily enhanced by adding links and offers in-between the different spaces, such as stepping stones or signs inviting children through and around the site.

# Ecole Choisey

**Name of Setting:** *Ecole Choisey*  
**Time & Date of Visit:** 9 – 5pm  
**Number of children (capacity):** 215 (270)  
**Number of Staff:** 13  
**Age range of Children:** 4 - 11 Years

Ecole Choisey is a medium primary school in the 12<sup>th</sup> arrondissement for 270 children. During our observation there were approximately 220 children present on this day as some children had left early for their school holidays.

**Ecole Choisey Assessment Chart**

	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Physical Environment</b>		1			
<b>Novelty:</b> Offers newness, change and engagement		1			
<b>Springboards:</b> Provide starting points, concepts, ideas & possibilities		1			
<b>Loose parts:</b> Give opportunity for creativity, problem solving & changing environments		1			
<b>Water:</b> Enables mastery experiences, conceptual understanding & investigation		1			
<b>Fire:</b> Creates mastery experiences, risk management, exploration & respect		1			
<b>Sand/Earth:</b> Provides mastery experience, construction and deconstruction, & creativity		1			
<b>Senses: Sight – Touch – Taste – Smell – Sound</b> Sets the scene for experimentation and exploration of the environment enabling understanding and a sense of awe.		1			
<b>Social Spaces:</b> Enables opportunities for communication, collaboration & relationships				1	
<b>Open Spaces:</b> Gross motor skills, cardio vascular, freedom, teamwork & possibility				1	
<b>Focussed Spaces:</b> Creates space for reflection, structured and solitary activity & fine motor skills				1	
<b>Wheeled Space:</b> Offers Co-ordination, balance risk and skill				1	
<b>Journeys:</b> Enables flow and connection, invitations/opportunities, variation and ways of moving				1	
<b>Landscapes:</b> Creates perspective, variation seasonal change, materials and possibility.				1	
<b>Risk:</b> Provides benefit, learning limits, challenge, excitement & resilience				1	
<b>Identity:</b> Creates opportunity for self-expression, performance, confidence and self-esteem				1	

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The site offered three main spaces:  
 A large flat playground engaging children in directional games such as handball, football and basketball.  
 A small covered space where children were playing card games and chatting in small groups.  
 A courtyard with trees. Unfortunately due to a staff illness children were not allowed to play in this part for our observation, although some children did dip in and out playing with chalks now and again.

Football and basketball were the most popular choices with some smaller focussed activities in the more contained areas. Overall the play observed was very fluent with children engaged in quite long sustained play frames. They appeared to self-manage their play with little adult intervention very competently.



# Diagnosis

From the assessment the overall score was quite low, which was mainly due to the physical constraints of the landscape on offer. Two factors that the setting were stronger on however were:

**Open spaces** were an obvious strong point of this playground. The large flat expanses offered children lots of space and freedom to engage in directional games of various descriptions... It also leaves the space slack meaning it could be accommodated for other uses such as PE in curriculum time or sports day etc.



**Focussed Spaces** were offered well in the two other parts of the play space. The covered area provided sufficient containment enabling children opportunity to play card games, loom bands and colouring activities



The playground with the trees offered opportunities for different contained activities with the trees providing interesting focus and protection.



There were five aspects that could be improved these were:

- Landscapes particularly fixed height and variation of surface texture
- Risk
- Identity
- Wheeled Space
- Sand

The staff seemed to make very few interventions on the children's play and play was relatively uninterrupted which created quite long sustained play frames.

The lead staff demonstrated good playwork knowledge and understanding. There was a plan to develop a garden area in the main play space and change the play slightly to alleviate football issues. They were keen to improve the existing play offer and were open to suggestions.

# Ecole Wurtz

**Name of Setting:** *Ecole Wurtz*

**Time & Date of Visit:** 10 – 2pm 2<sup>nd</sup> July

**Number of children (capacity):** 220 (276)

**Number of Staff:** 10

**Age range of Children:** 4 – 11 Years

Ecole Wurtz is a medium primary school located in the 13<sup>th</sup> arrondissement for 276 children. During our observation there were approximately 220 children present on this day as some children had left early for their school holidays.

The play space consisted of one large open area broken at the end and sides by some trees. During the morning break the space became incredibly crowded as the children played within the central area. However at lunchtime a large indoor area was utilised as well as the lunch hall which spread the children around space more evenly.

The staff really helped to animate the space bringing a range of different choices into the space such as clapping games, drawing and hand ball.

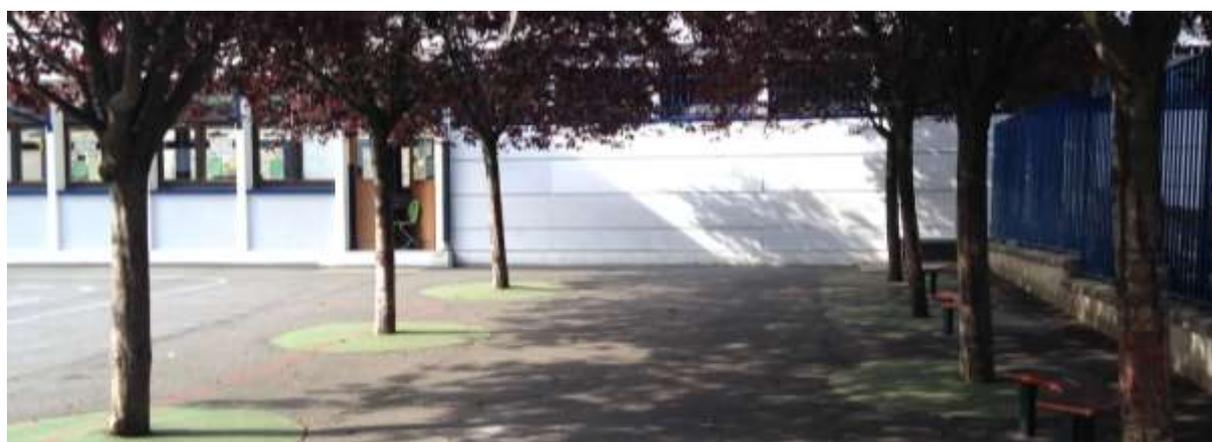
The children flowed around the spaces well and the play was very fluid supported by the staff well. Children seemed very comfortable resolving conflicts and self-managing their play.

**Ecole Wurtz Assessment Chart**



	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Physical Environment</b>					
<b>Novelty:</b> <i>Offers newness, change and engagement</i>					
<b>Springboards:</b> <i>Provide starting points, concepts, ideas &amp; possibilities</i>					
<b>Loose parts:</b> <i>Give opportunity for creativity, problem solving &amp; changing environments</i>					
<b>Water:</b> <i>Enables mastery experiences, conceptual understanding &amp; investigation</i>					
<b>Fire:</b> <i>Creates mastery experiences, risk management, exploration &amp; respect</i>					
<b>Sand/Earth:</b> <i>Provides mastery experience, construction and deconstruction, &amp; creativity</i>					
<b>Senses: Sight – Touch – Taste – Smell – Sound</b> <i>Sets the scene for experimentation and exploration of the environment enabling understanding and a sense of awe.</i>					
<b>Social Spaces:</b> <i>Enables opportunities for communication, collaboration &amp; relationships</i>					
<b>Open Spaces:</b> <i>Gross motor skills, cardio vascular, freedom, teamwork &amp; possibility</i>					
<b>Focussed Spaces:</b> <i>Creates space for reflection, structured and solitary activity &amp; fine motor skills</i>					
<b>Wheeled Space:</b> <i>Offers Co-ordination, balance risk and skill</i>					
<b>Journeys:</b> <i>Enables flow and connection, invitations/opportunities, variation and ways of moving</i>					
<b>Landscapes:</b> <i>Creates perspective, variation seasonal change, materials and possibility.</i>					
<b>Risk:</b> <i>Provides benefit, learning limits, challenge, excitement &amp; resilience</i>					
<b>Identity:</b> <i>Creates opportunity for self-expression, performance, confidence and self-esteem</i>					

**Scoring:**  
 0 = poor quality or non-existent  
 1 = low quality or low opportunities  
 2 = satisfactory quality or number of opportunities  
 3 = Good quality or variety of opportunities  
 4 = excellent quality or wide variety of opportunity



# Diagnosis

The initial assessment score was quite low but after observing the play with the staff the score rose considerably mainly due to the considerable change they brought into the space. Three factors that the setting were particularly good were:

**Springboards** were numerous but mainly provided by the staff including colouring pens and books, clapping games, ball games and some role play scenarios. These were changed or adapted regularly by the staff in the setting



**Open space** was an obvious strong point of this playground. The large flat playground offered children lots of space and freedom to engage in directional games of various descriptions... It also leaves the space slack meaning it could be accommodated for other uses such as PE in curriculum time or sports day etc.



**Focussed Spaces** were plentiful in this playground. The trees provided containment and shade enabling children opportunity to play clapping games, small tag based games as well as just a space to hang out. The buildings provided lots of corners and edges too for play to start from. The indoor space gave again more options for flow and journey around the space as well as additional focus.



There were five aspects that looked like they could be improved these were:

- Loose parts
- Sand/Earth
- Journeys
- Landscapes
- Identity

Although the staff really animated this site building understanding of how loose parts can be introduced into this small space would need to be carefully considered. In terms of how this would impact on the environmental offer.

# Ecole Virtue

**Name of Setting:** *Ecole Virtue*

**Time & Date of Visit:** 9 – 12am 2<sup>nd</sup> July

**Number of children (capacity):** 200 (250)

**Number of Staff:** 3

**Age range of Children:** 4 - 11 Years

Ecole Virtue is regarded as progressive and differs from mainstream primary schools in terms of structure. There is no permanent head teacher and class teachers take it in turns to co-ordinate the school for a year. This style of participative approach puts children and parents at the centre in discussions and decisions across the school.

The site offered a flat L shape playground lined with interesting and varied corners and edges as well as a large indoor space which the children can move freely between. The site has had a PlayPod since February 2015 which has clearly been well used.

The space was minimally supervised with only three staff on duty. Hardly any intervention was required from the adults however as the children virtually self-managed playtime themselves.

The children played in large groups of at least 30 (mixed age and gender), playing clapping games, circle games and marbles. As well as this a small group of children were also selling coffee to teaching staff to raise money for playground developments.

**Ecole Virtue Assessment Chart**



	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Physical Environment</b>		1			
<b>Novelty:</b> <i>Offers newness, change and engagement</i>		1			
<b>Springboards:</b> <i>Provide starting points, concepts, ideas &amp; possibilities</i>			1		
<b>Loose parts:</b> <i>Give opportunity for creativity, problem solving &amp; changing environments</i>				1	
<b>Water:</b> <i>Enables mastery experiences, conceptual understanding &amp; investigation</i>		1			
<b>Fire:</b> <i>Creates mastery experiences, risk management, exploration &amp; respect</i>			1		
<b>Sand/Earth:</b> <i>Provides mastery experience, construction and deconstruction, &amp; creativity</i>				1	
<b>Senses: Sight – Touch – Taste – Smell – Sound</b> <i>Sets the scene for experimentation and exploration of the environment enabling understanding and a sense of awe</i>					1
<b>Social Spaces:</b> <i>Enables opportunities for communication, collaboration &amp; relationships</i>				1	
<b>Open Spaces:</b> <i>Gross motor skills, cardio vascular, freedom, teamwork &amp; possibility</i>					1
<b>Focussed Spaces:</b> <i>Creates space for reflection, structured and solitary activity &amp; fine motor skills</i>		1			
<b>Wheeled Space:</b> <i>Offers Co-ordination, balance risk and skill</i>					1
<b>Journeys:</b> <i>Enables flow and connection, invitations/opportunities, variation and ways of moving</i>					1
<b>Landscapes:</b> <i>Creates perspective, variation seasonal change, materials and possibility.</i>					1
<b>Risk:</b> <i>Provides benefit, learning limits, challenge, excitement &amp; resilience</i>					1
<b>Identity:</b> <i>Creates opportunity for self-expression, performance, confidence and self-esteem</i>					1

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# Diagnosis

From the assessment the overall score was quite high. Children were incredibly independent and had autonomy of the space which reflected the strong pedagogical approach to child centred learning. Three factors that the setting were particularly outstanding were:

**Loose Parts** were plentiful with lots of variation of texture, colour and sizes. The children clearly enjoyed the addition of loose parts enabling them to utilise the surrounding environment to their advantage which increased the risk level within the space significantly.



**Focussed Spaces** were various in the playground. The trees provided shade and containment which worked well in combination with the scrap. The building also provided lots of corners and edges too for play to start from. A large indoor covered spaces provided additional options too.



**Social Spaces** were offered in various different sizes around that offered a range of social places for children to base their play around.



There were five aspects that looked like they could be improved these were:

- Novelty
- Water
- Sand /Earth
- Wheeled Space
- Identity

The staff ratios provided the opportunity or created the expectation for the children to manage their play independently using adults as a last resort this gave children an unusual autonomy of the space that would not be dissimilar to a good play setting in the UK.

# Laluna

**Name of Setting:** Laluna

**Time & Date of Visit:** 9 – 12am 9<sup>th</sup> July

**Number of children (capacity):** 25 (41)

**Number of Staff:** 4

**Age range of Children:** 0 – 3 Years

The overall feel of the space felt like a nursery from England with aspects of various methodologies' such as Reggio and Steiner. This was mainly notable from the more natural loose parts available to the children such as wooden blocks and the overall organisation of the space.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> July we did an observation from 9.00 – 1.00pm. There were 25 children present on this day with an overall capacity of 41 children. 4 members of staff were present on duty supported the space well changing regularly supporting the children's play needs as it developed.

Play initially started indoors with activities laid out for the children. After half an hour a large proportion of the children moved outdoors as did the staff. The emphasis of the adult was primarily to facilitate the space giving overall autonomy to the children. There was very little intervention or structuring of the children's play during our observation.

**La Lluna Assessment Chart**

Erastore PlayPod

	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Physical Environment</b>					
<b>Novelty:</b> Offers newness, change and engagement					
<b>Springboards:</b> Provide starting points, concepts, ideas & possibilities					
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<b>Fire:</b> Creates mastery experiences, risk management, exploration & respect					
<b>Sand/Earth:</b> Provides mastery experience, construction and deconstruction, & creativity Senses: Sight – Touch – Taste – Smell – Sound Sets the scene for experimentation and exploration of the environment enabling understanding and a sense of awe.					
<b>Social Spaces:</b> Enables opportunities for communication, collaboration & relationships					
<b>Open Spaces:</b> Gross motor skills, cardio vascular, freedom, teamwork & possibility					
<b>Focussed Spaces:</b> Creates space for reflection, structured and solitary activity & fine motor skills					
<b>Wheeled Space:</b> Offers Co-ordination, balance risk and skill					
<b>Journeys:</b> Enables flow and connection, invitations/opportunities, variation and ways of moving					
<b>Landscapes:</b> Creates perspective, variation seasonal change, materials and possibility.					
<b>Risk:</b> Provides benefit, learning limits, challenge, excitement & resilience					
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# Diagnosis

From the assessment the overall score was very high. Children were incredibly independent and had autonomy of the space which reflected the strong pedagogical approach to child centred learning. Three factors that the setting were particularly good were:

**Springboards** were numerous with lots of variation including things hanging from trees, tools and various loose parts. These were changed or adapted regularly by the staff in the setting



**Sand / Earth** permeated throughout the outside space with different offers in various formats. The children used sand in many aspects of their play



**Social Spaces** were offered in various different sizes around the site some in open spaces others utilising the parts of the site that offered containment.



There were three aspects that looked like they could be improved these were:

- Loose parts particularly larger loose parts
- Identity
- Wheeled spaces

Journeys and landscapes could be easily enhanced by adding temporary stepping stones, some posts with holes in, carabenas in fences etc. The staff had made new proposals on offer all around the site which added to the novelty and change aspect.

It was discussed that the staff could benefit from ideas for using loose parts as fascination traps so that they can then provoke the environment further.

# Conclusions

From our observations, discussions, assessments and reflections we can summarise the following:

## France

The knowledge and context about the audit tool was explored and shared with partners and practiced on all four sites. Scores were reflected on and discussed.

The sites were flat and were relatively little design intervention for play enabling a great potential for play development

The sites needed animation by the staff to make them work and more playable. Some staff observed demonstrated good approach and awareness of good playwork practice.

The children seemed to be able to play independently and self-mange disputes and minor conflicts themselves despite the length of play and the heat conditions.

All the sites apart from one didn't contain any loose parts and the introduction of them would generate a big impact on the play particularly in association with the environments they are in.

The structure of school management and staffing for lunchtimes means that integrating loose parts holds great potential, in terms of duplicating the idea and measuring impact on play and learning.

## Spain

The knowledge and context about the audit tool was explored and shared with partners and practiced on one site successfully.

The Methodology Pedagogy presentation seemed to contain similarities to current playwork methodology accepted and used within the UK.

The practice observed within the setting was almost identical to good/outstanding practice demonstrated within early years settings across the UK.

The spaces within the setting were designed to be functional and changeable to the learning needs of the children at all points of the day.

The nursery has a priority focus on improving the outdoor space.

The children had a lot of autonomy of the space and changed it to support their play. This gave them freedom and independence.

The site would benefit from having more loose parts particularly larger loose parts that encouraged more group collaboration and discussion.

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