

21st Century Children: the state of play

Glasgow Centre
for Population
Health
21-2-18

Sue Palmer

Chair of Upstart Scotland



UPSTART

a campaign to introduce a
kindergarten stage
for children aged
three to seven



www.upstart.scot

A Nordic-style kindergarten stage between 3 and 7 with the focus on

- health and wellbeing
- learning through play.

Adult support and nurture, as opposed to 'explicit teaching'.



Literacy

Focusing attention

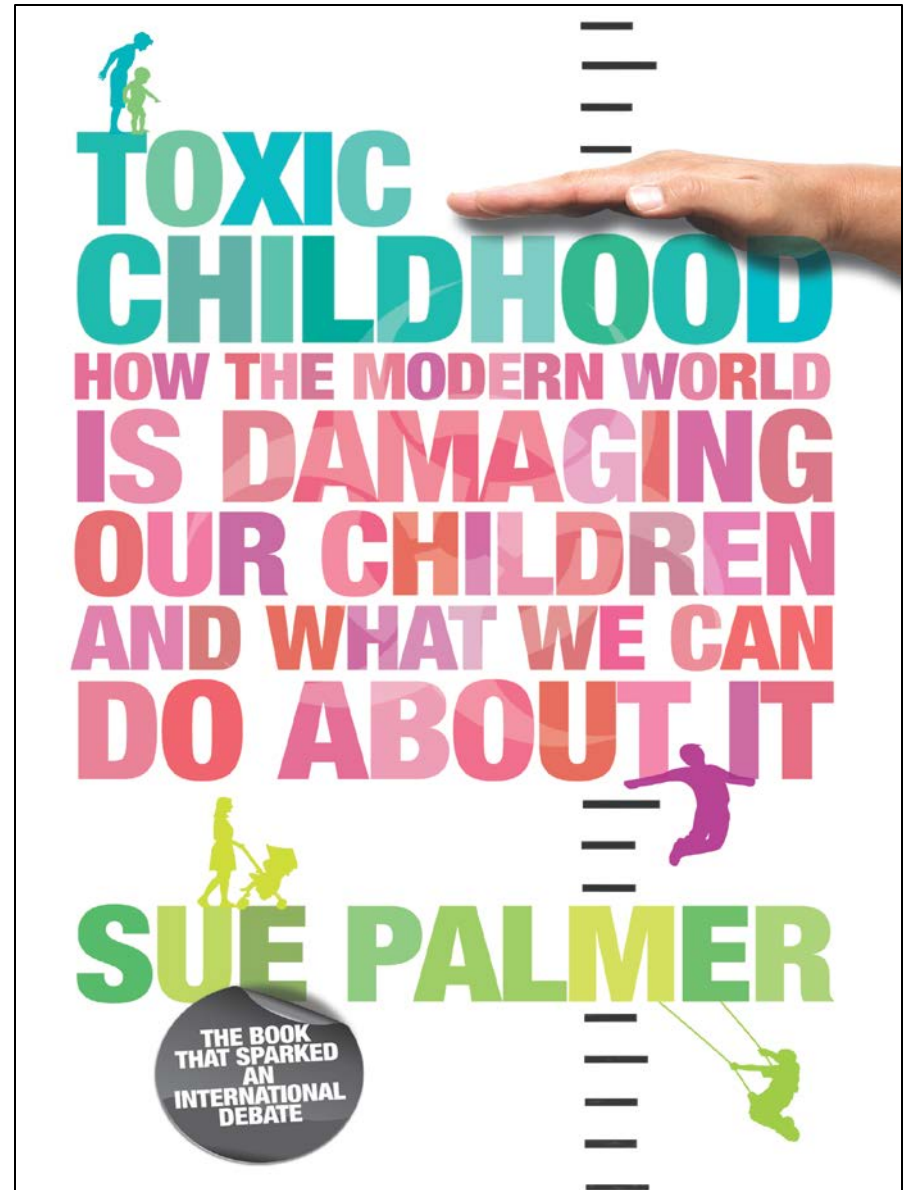


Self regulation



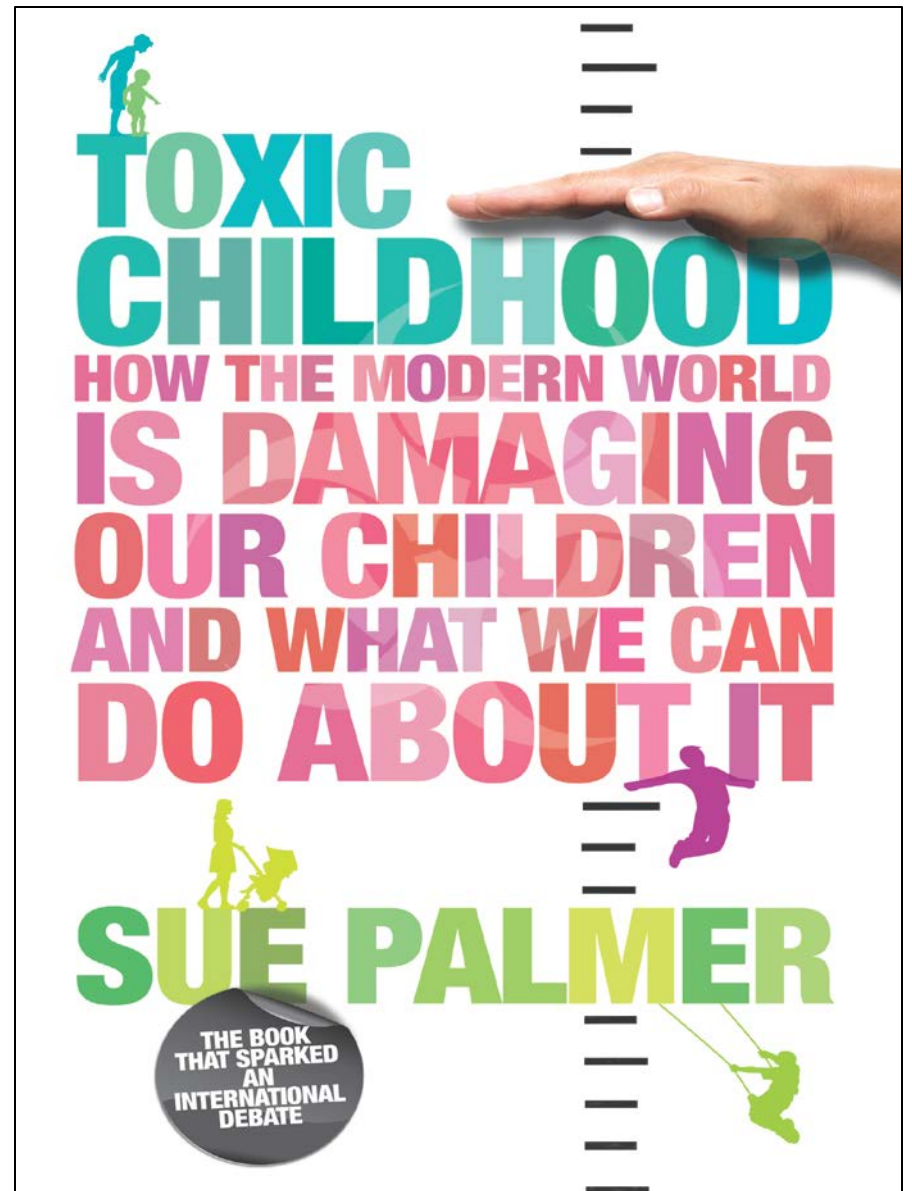
Empathy and social skills

Language



2006

Diet
Activity and play
Sleep
Communication
Family structures
Childcare
Education
Media use
Marketing
Parenting/society



2006

Daily Telegraph, 12-9-06

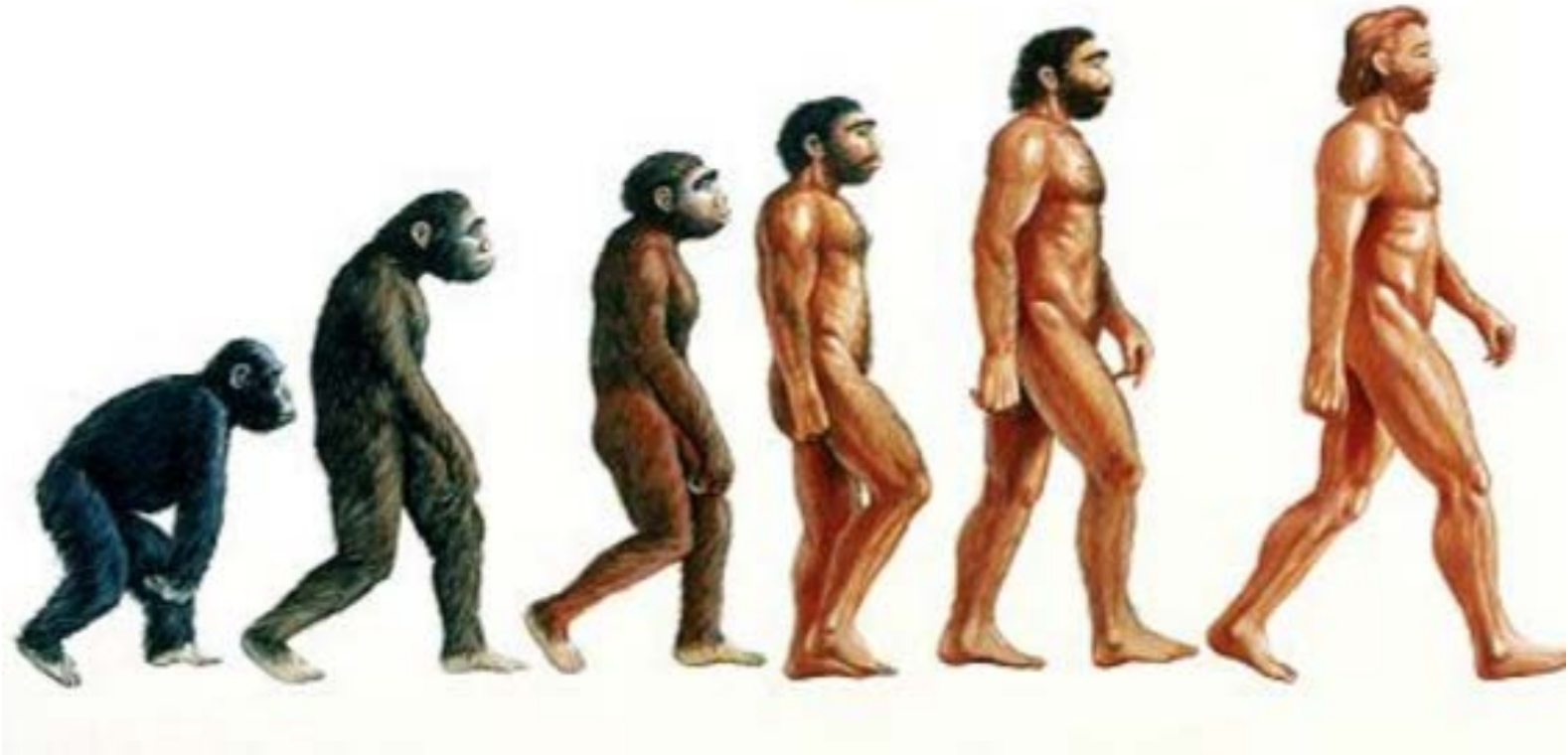
Junk culture 'is poisoning our children'



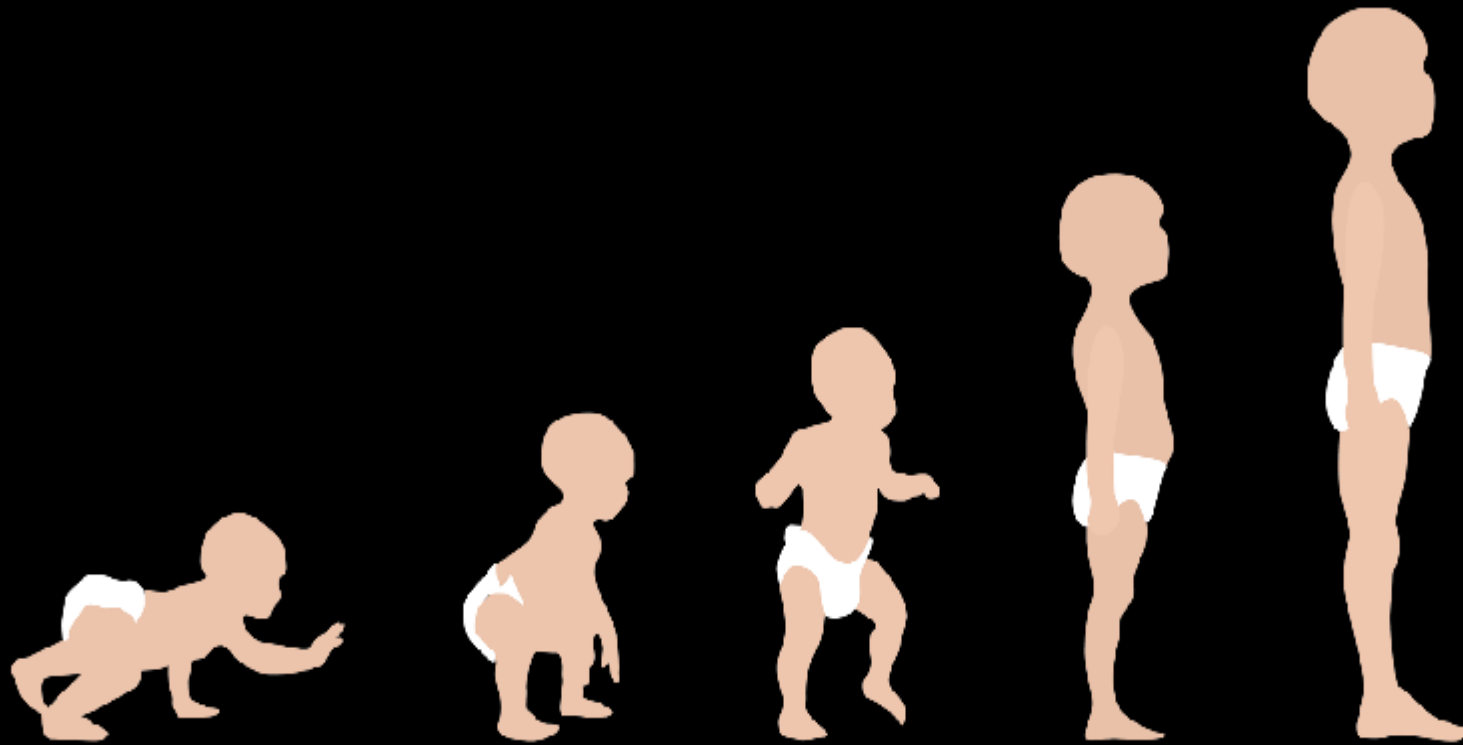
Sir - As professionals and academics from a range of backgrounds, we are deeply concerned at the escalating incidence of childhood depression and children's behavioural and developmental conditions. We believe this is largely due to a lack of understanding, on the part of both politicians and the general public, of the realities and subtleties of child development.

- decline of active, outdoor play
- increasingly screen-based lifestyles
- commercialisation of childhood
- hyper-competitive schooling system.

Homo sapiens has evolved into the most successful species on the planet



because of our astounding capacity to learn and adapt.



Human children are designed to develop certain skills
and capacities naturally.

These are the foundations on which we build formal education.



Early childhood care and education

Early childhood, defined as the period from birth to eight years old, is a time of remarkable growth with brain development at its peak. During this stage, children are highly influenced by the environment and the people that surround them.

Early childhood care and
development of
foundation
responsi

school. It aims at the holistic
and a solid and broad
capable and

Early childhood,
defined as the period from birth
to eight years old, is a time of
remarkable growth with brain
development at its peak.

The first seven years

Greece.... Rome...

'The first seven years are for play.'

The prophet Mohammed

'The first seven years are the gods' domain.'

Japanese proverb

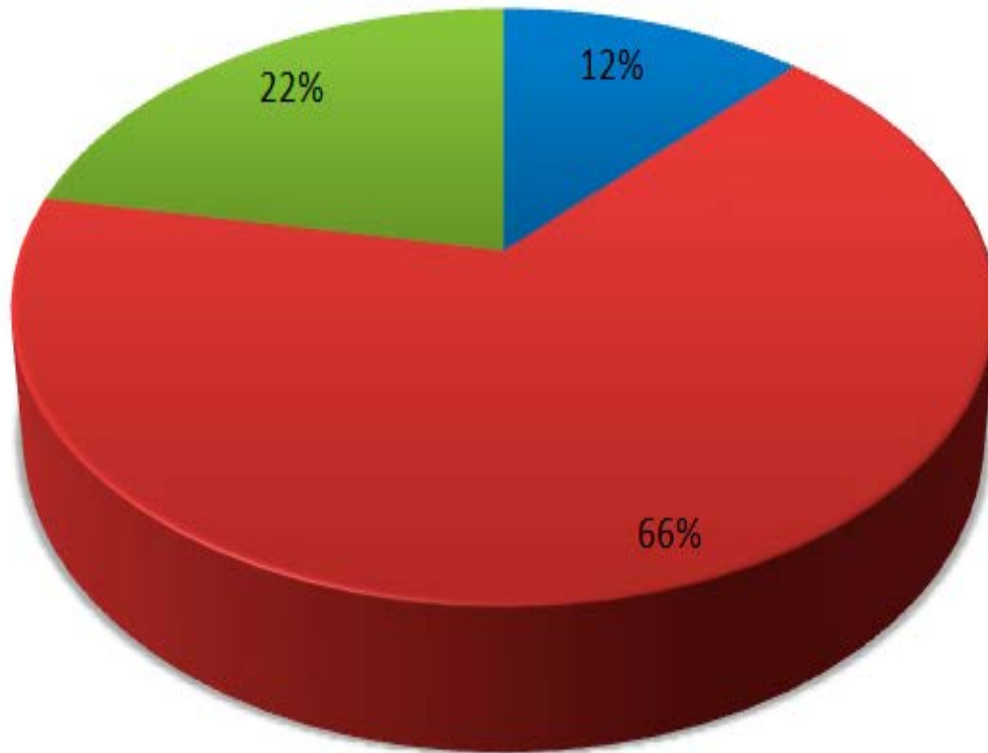
'Give me a child till he is seven years old,
and I will show you the man.'

Jesuits

Froebel, Montessori, Steiner, Malaguzzi

Piaget Vygotsky

School starting ages around the world



6 yrs	66%
7 yrs	22%
4/5 yrs	12%

Scotland has one of the earliest school starting ages in the world.

All but two of the countries that send their children to school before the age of 6 are ex-members of the British empire!

Education ranking of western nations

PISA, 2016

(school starting ages in brackets)

LITERACY

1. Canada (6)

2. Finland (7)

3. Ireland (6)

MATHS

1. Switzerland (7)

2. Estonia (7)

3. Canada (6)

SCIENCE

1. Estonia (7)

2. Finland (7)

3. Canada (6)



Creativity



Problem-solving



Empathy and
social skills

Focusing
attention



Self regulation



Nature: the biological systems that underpin life and learning

Nurture: the unique environmental experiences that shape our understanding and emotional responses

Nurture

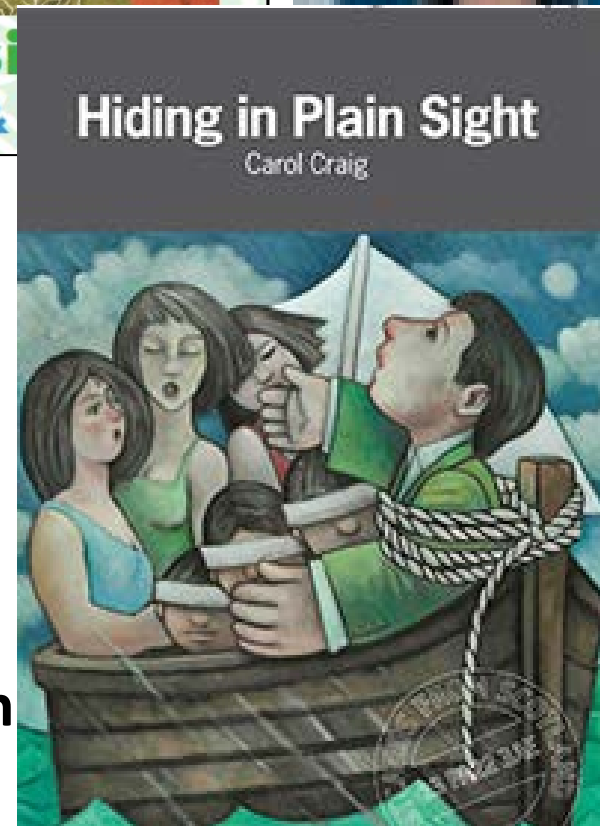
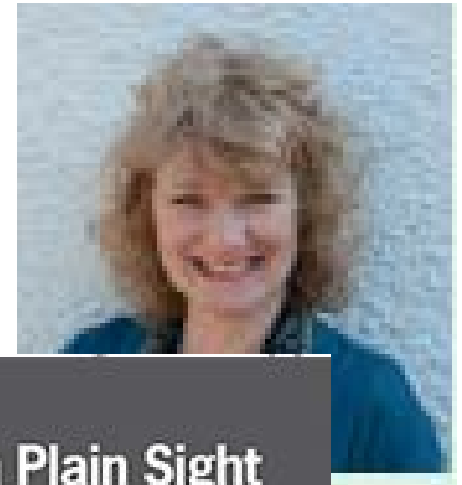
LOVE

PLAY

Nature



Adverse Childhood Experiences



Exploring Scotland's Ill-health

PLAY

OUTDOORS

SOCIAL

**freely chosen, personally directed,
intrinsically motivated behaviour
that actively engages the child**

LOOSELY
SUPERVISED

LITTLE OR NO
EQUIPMENT

THE POWER OF PLAY



Self-confidence and self-efficacy

Creativity

Problem-solving skills

Communication and social skills

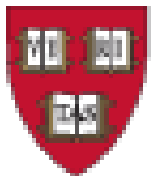
A love of learning

THE POWER OF PLAY



Self-regulation

Resilience



Center on the Developing Child
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



Self regulation

Science tells us that brains, minds, are built, not born.






It's not just about learning language or learning numbers or learning colors.

INHIBITORY CONTROL

WORKING MEMORY

MENTAL FLEXIBILITY

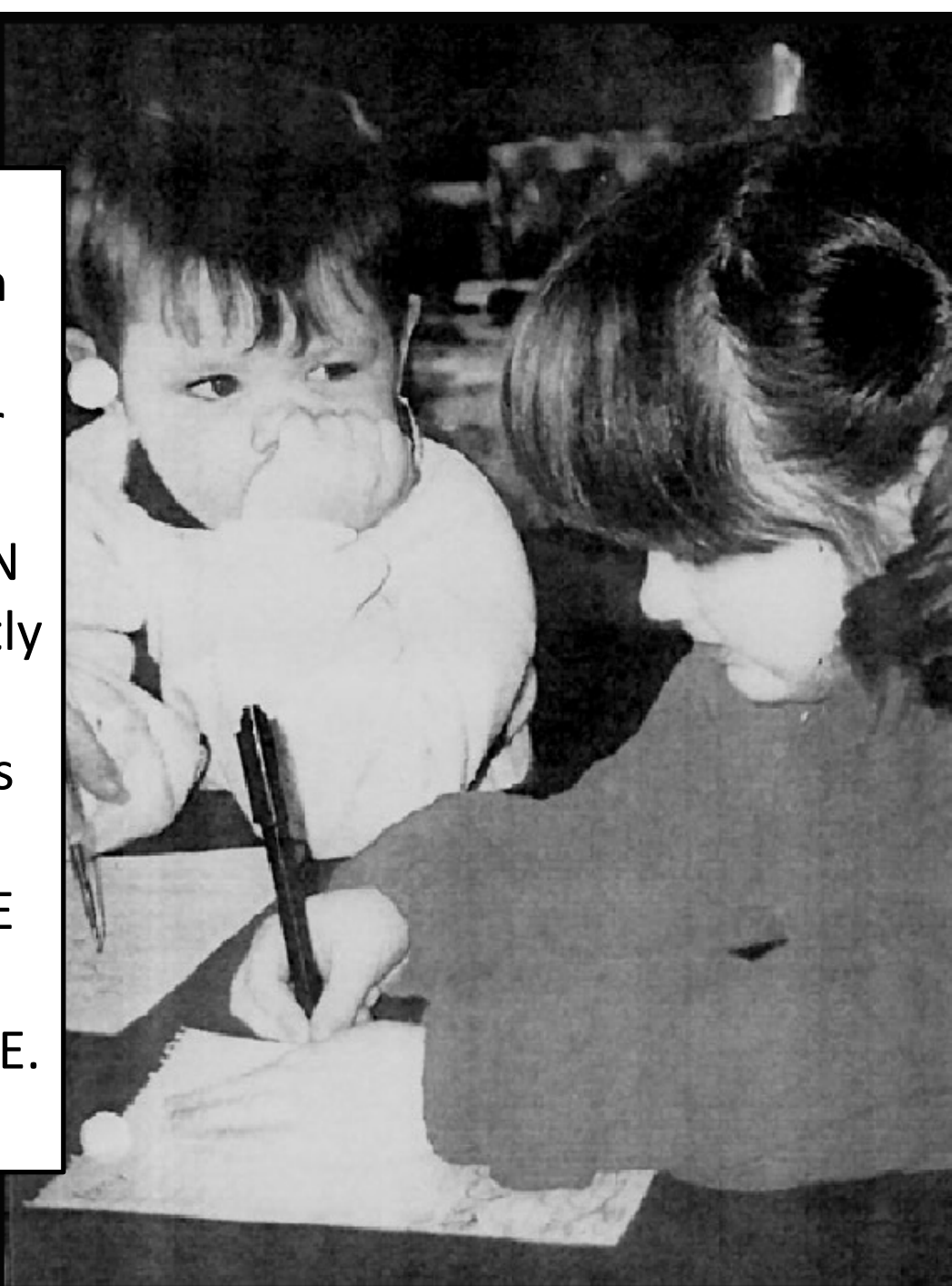
A woman with blonde hair is shown from the chest up, looking slightly to the right of the camera. She has a serious expression and her mouth is open as if she is speaking. She is wearing a colorful, patterned top. The background is dark with some blue and purple lighting. At the bottom of the image, there is a black text box with white text.

Children who are struggling with these capacities often look like children just aren't paying attention



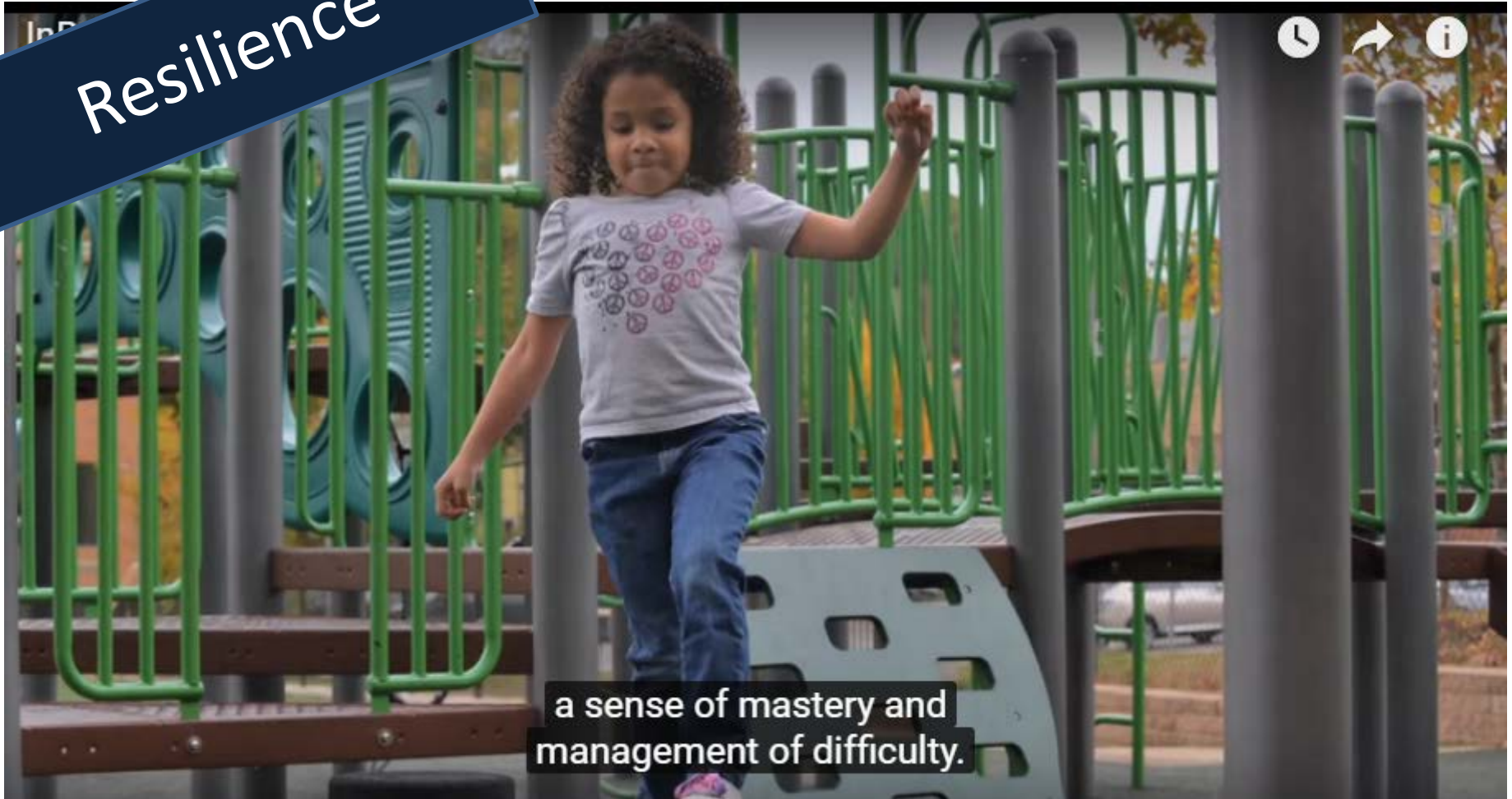
or children who are deliberately not controlling themselves.

For children whose capacity for SELF-REGULATION is insufficiently developed, the choice is between CHALLENGE and COMPLIANCE.



Those who COMPLY may become dependent on adult approval for their learning...
i.e.
EXTRINSIC rather than INTRINSIC MOTIVATION.

Resilience



a sense of mastery and
management of difficulty.

The ability to deal with stress, rise to challenges,
and bounce back from difficulties

- The availability of at least one stable and supportive relationship between a child and an adult care-giver.
- A sense of mastery over life circumstances.
- Strong executive functions and self-regulation skills.
- The supportive context of affirming faith or cultural traditions.

Kindergarten ethos

Adults expected to support children at their individual developmental levels

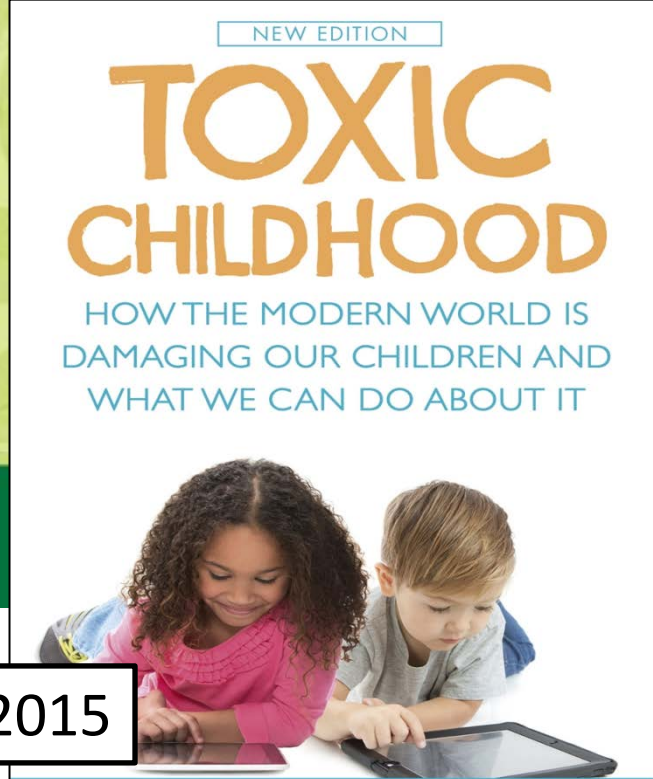
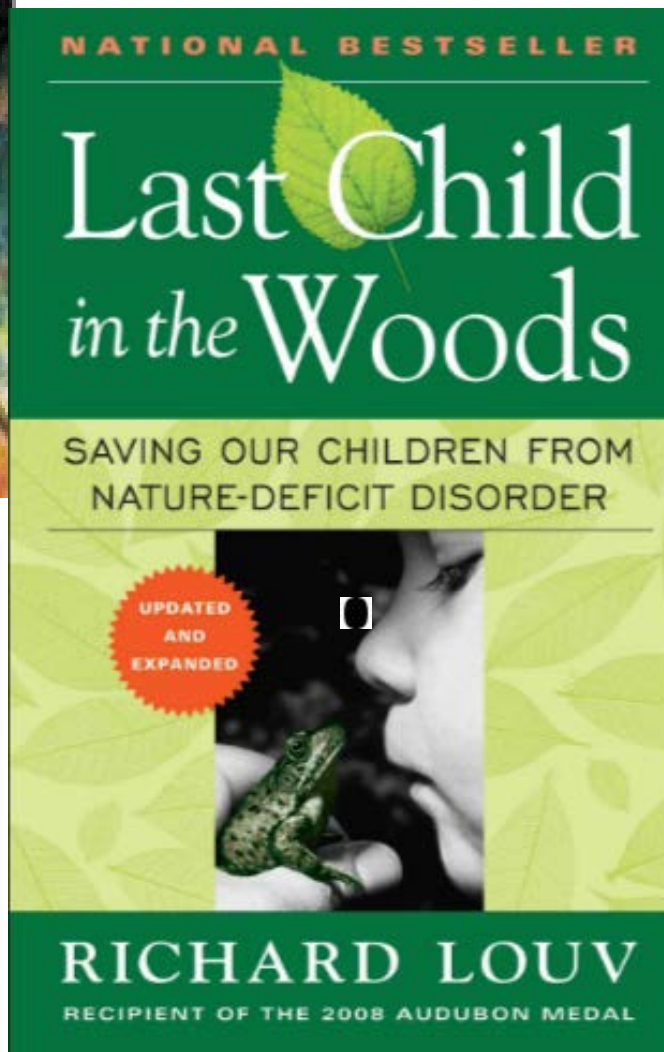
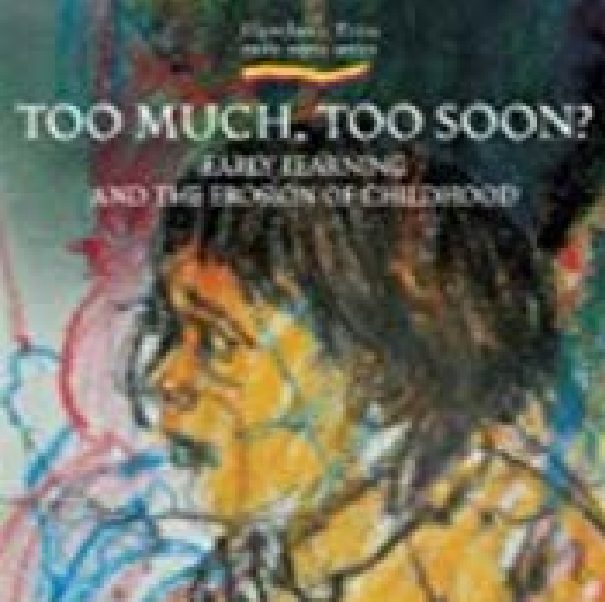
School ethos

Adults expected to teach children according to age-related standards

Global consumer culture







SUE PALMER

A complex combination of social and cultural change, including:

- the decline of active, outdoor play
- an increasingly screen-based lifestyle
- the commercialisation of childhood
- a hyper-competitive schooling system.



THE DECLINE OF 'REAL PLAY'



Active, creative, outdoor play is being squeezed out of children's lives...

by the twin forces of 'cool' and school.



British children among the least active in the world, with exercise 'stripped out' of modern lives



Daily
Telegraph,
20-11-16

Today's four-year-olds often 'not physically ready' for school, experts warn

Competitive parenting, iPads and screens are all contributing to a decrease in child mobility can impact on academic learning



Independent,
1/9/16

Child obesity rising again, NHS report reveals

Guardian 3-11-16

Nearly 10% of children in first year of school in England are obese, according to figures that also expose growing class divide



Vitamin D deficiency
Myopia
Heart disease
Osteoporosis

📷 The number of obese ten and 11-year-olds in their last primary school year also rose from 19.1% in 2014-15 to 19.8% last year. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

Quarter of a million children receiving mental health care in England

Data covering 60% of mental health trusts shows 11,849 boys and girls aged five and under among those getting help

Guardian, 3-10-16



stress anxiety depression self-harm eating disorders

Number of children seeking help for anxiety rising sharply, Childline charity warns

Independent, 31-10-16

Children face 12-month mental health wait



BBC News, 7-4-17

Almost two-thirds of children worry 'all the time'



BBC News, 6-2-17

Worries about school work affect about two-fifths of children, the research found

THE LANCET

Health professionals for a new century: transforming education to strengthen health systems in an interdependent world
The Lancet and Education Commission: Health professionals for the 21st Century

November 2017

Free play and children's mental health

The growing crisis in children's mental health in the UK is widely recognised. Data from children's charities, including Childline and the UK National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children, have shown substantial and increasing increases in demand for their support,

One particular characteristic of this context concerns the amount of free time that children have for uninitiated activities and indicates that free time has declined over the past few generations. The National Trust, for example, reports that the amount of time children are allowed to play in their homes has shrunk by 50% over time, changes in education have restricted the amount of free play and increased pressure and high levels of stress. A comprehensive analysis of the causes of the crisis in children's mental health and young

Article by Dr David Whitebread, reviewing the evidence for a link between the rise in mental health disorders and the decline of children's free play.



PLAY

PLAY STRATEGY
FOR SCOTLAND: OUR VISION

INSPIRING SCOTLAND

Go2Play

XPLAY
SCOTLAND

Delivering Children and Young People's
Right to Play in Scotland



The City of Play:

URBAN INNOVATION BY DESIGN

Planning for play: seventy years of ineffective public policy? The example of Glasgow, Scotland

Valerie Wright, Ade Kearns, Lynn Abram & Barry Hazley

To cite this article: Valerie Wright, Ade Kearns, Lynn Abram & Barry Hazley (2017): Planning for play: seventy years of ineffective public policy? The example of Glasgow, Scotland, Planning Perspectives, DOI: [10.1080/02665433.2017.1393627](https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2017.1393627)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2017.1393627>

Planning Perspectives, October 2017

Barriers to play:

Traffic

Breakdown of communities

Parents' working patterns

Public attitudes to unaccompanied children

The ready availability of indoor sedentary alternatives...

by the author of
Toxic Childhood

Upstart

The case for raising the school
starting age and providing what
the under-sevens *really* need

SUE PALMER



Floris Books, 2016

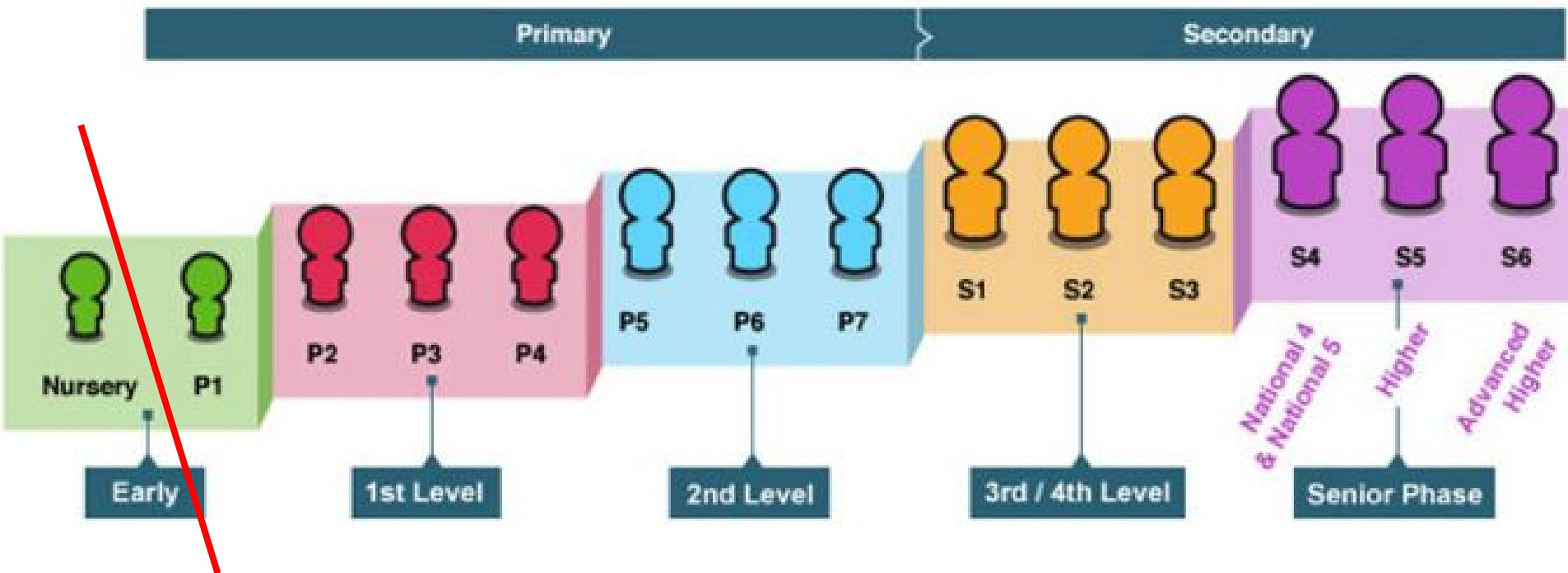
'Admirable, clear, powerful: a must'
Steve Biddulph, author of Raising Boys and Raising Girls

The vital importance of joining up the political dots between Health, Childcare, Education, Social Justice...

0-3 yrs
Health

3-4/5 yrs
Childcare

4/5 – 8 yrs
Education



We need

- a coherent Early Years policy (0-8 years) including a ring-fenced kindergarten stage (3-7)
- recognition that the developmental ethos of appropriate education/care for the under-7s is qualitatively different from that of formal schooling
- an EY curriculum devised by EY specialists, free from downward pressure from educationists further up the educational hierarchy.

Closing the Equity Gap

1. Improving early learning

2. Promoting social and emotional wellbeing

3. Promoting healthy lifestyles and tackling health inequalities

4. Identifying and driving strategies to improve attainment in literacy and numeracy

5. Providing high quality learning and teaching

6. Providing a focus and support targeted to needs and abilities

7. Promoting use of evidence and data to evaluate and improve closing the gap in educational outcomes

8. Developing employability skills and improving positive and sustained destinations

10. Working with partners to explore new and innovative approaches to tackling inequality

11. Developing professional learning and leadership at all levels

9. Engaging families and communities

12. Conducting research into the equity gap

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Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon unveils tests plan for schools

🕒 1 September 2015 🚩

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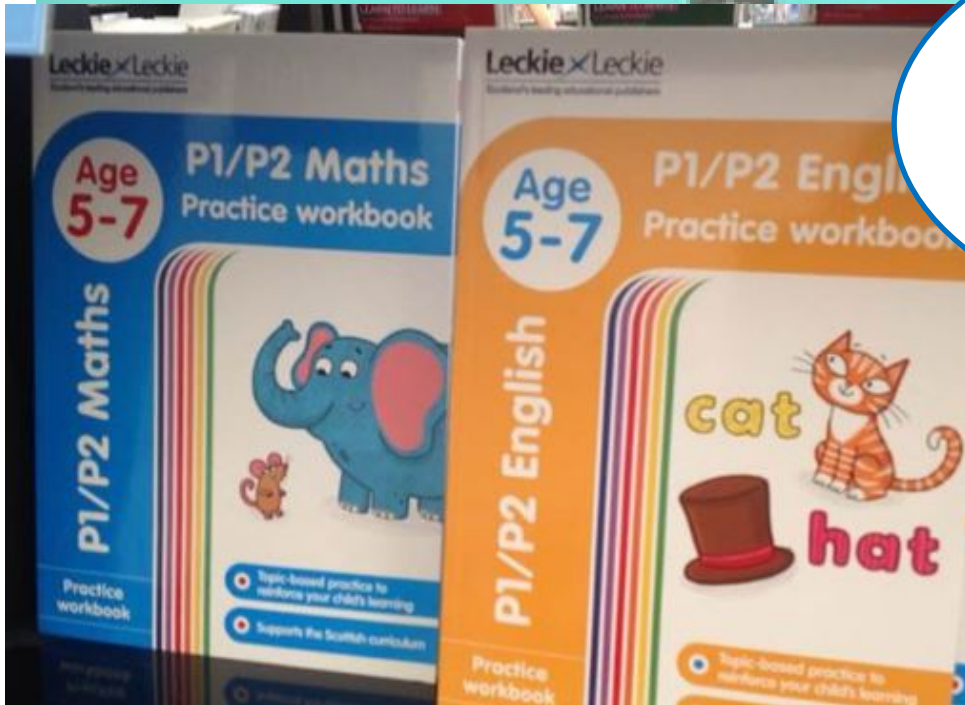


BBC News Online, 1-9-15



Practice Assessments: Primary 1

**Tablet-based
assessments in literacy
and numeracy at
P1, P4, P7**



**Tests related
to benchmarks ...**

READING

Uses knowledge of sounds, letters, patterns to read words.

Recognises common words in texts.

Uses knowledge of sight vocabulary/ tricky words to read words in context.

Reads aloud familiar texts with attention to simple punctuation.

Uses context clues to support understanding of different texts.

WRITING

Knows sounds of lowercase and some uppercase letters.

Forms most lowercase letters legibly.

Makes an attempt to spell familiar words correctly.

Makes an attempt to use a capital letter and full stop in at least one sentence.

Writes to reflect own experiences and feelings using appropriate vocabulary to reflect meaning.

UPSTART

a campaign to introduce a
kindergarten stage

for children aged
three to seven



www.upstart.scot



Launched, May 2016

‘rights-focused, relationship-centred,
play-based
(as often as possible outdoors)’

Upstart supporters include:

Bruce Adamson Scotland's Commissioner for Children & Young People

David Baxter consultant community paediatrician, Highlands Region

Jackie Brock CEO, Children in Scotland

David Cameron educationist, contributor to *Curriculum for Excellence*

John Carnochan co-founder, Scottish Violence Reduction Unit, Glasgow

Theresa Casey President, International Play Association

Dr Beth Christie Learning for Sustainability, University of Edinburgh

John Davis Professor of Childhood Inclusion, University of Edinburgh

Mary Glasgow Director, Children & Families, Children 1st Scotland

Marguerite Hunter Blair CEO Play Scotland

Pat Kane Musician, writer, broadcaster, Glasgow

Dr Miles Mack Chair, Royal College of General Practitioners Scotland

Cathy McCulloch Founder & Director, Children's Parliament

Juliet Robertson Outdoor Education specialist and author, Aberdeen

Maggie Simpson CEO Scottish Childminding Association

Donald Smith Director, Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland (TRACS)

Colwyn Trevarthen Emeritus Professor of Child Psychology, Edinburgh

Dr Suzanne Zeedyk Research scientist, Dundee University



'The right to play is the child's first claim on the community. Play is nature's training for life. No community can infringe that right without doing deep and enduring harm to the minds and bodies of its citizens.'

David Lloyd George, 1925



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