

2025

PLAY THEIR WAY FESTIVAL



funded by:





Play Their Way

Background

We wanted to combine the new campaign (Play Their Way) with our 20-year celebration event.

The Play Their Way approach is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – the rights of children and young people to play, to develop and to be heard. These rights will often be referred to as the following:

- Voice
- Choice
- Journey

Essentially, if we play their way, more children and young people will enjoy being active, with the potential to lead happier and healthier lives.

For our 20 year celebration we aimed to utilise the beach which is a local asset.

This project was born from the combination of both.



How does it link to the School Games?

Outcome 1 - Advocate and position the delivery of the CMO daily active minutes for all young people, as a universal offer to maintain and grow school engagement.

Outcome 2 - Ensure all competition has a clear intent and creates positive experiences based on the motivation, competence and confidence of the young people that need our support the most.

Outcome 5 - Advocate and engage key stakeholders on the value of School Games to support local provision and improve the experience for young people and their families.

Summary of the Project



Autumn Term - At this point we only planned to combine our 20 year celebration with a Beach day using the Play Their Way campaign. We took our ideas to the Primary PE Subject leaders in our half termly meeting. We started the meeting with an introduction into the Play Their Way campaign. We then explained our ideas and asked the schools to design what it would look like.

Spring Term - We used the time we had before the summer festival to raise the profile of the Play Their Way campaign and its principles with our schools. Helping the school staff to understand why some children would prefer physical activity better without adult's interference and them imposing rules.

We also used this time to carry out some student voice with our target audience to decide what games would be fun to play on the beach. Some of these activities were not our normal activities so we had to purchase new equipment.

Summer Term: Aiming for sunshine our festival date was set for June 2025. The Play Their Way festival was so popular we had to split it into two to accommodate for the large number of children. Schools booked onto morning or afternoon sessions.

At the festival we used the new 'Beach Base' as a meeting point and for use of toilets etc. Aiming to introduce the children and staff of this new local facility.

The festival incorporated rotations of activities with equipment and basic rules, but the children themselves had to plan what to do and play and enjoy the activities 'their way'. Sports Leaders, School Staff and SSP staff were there to make sure the children were safe and encouraged to collaborate and work together to design their games.

In addition to the funded project we provided one more session after school for school staff and partners to help us celebrate our 20 years. Aiming for the same principles as the festival for children (introducing them to the new beach base, playing informal games and realising our local asset for getting active).



If we play their way, more children and young people will enjoy being active, with the potential to lead happier and healthier lives.

What Went Well?

The day was a huge success. Some of the highlights are below:

- Children enjoyed the day. Feedback given in our visitor book. (Comments of final page).
- Children came up with their own rules and were forced to work together to make decisions.
- Groups of children that never worked together started to play together.
- School staff found it hard at first not to get involved, but then realised that leaving children to decide rules etc should be done more often to develop resilience, creativity and problem solving skills.
- Some schools want to return to the beach more often and build it into their curriculum. Schools said they now know that coming to the beach is safe and ideas what to do.
- So many children from our area had never been to the beach - new experiences.

Challenges Faced

Our biggest challenge was planning an event on the beach:

- Having council permission for 6 months, then they changed their mind on the date.
- Also making sure children were safe by the water and in a public open space.

Once we had overcome this then planning this event was different than our normal events:

- Pupil led with no adult interaction? Making sure we had enough adults to keep children safe, but not to interfere with creativity and problem solving.
- Designing activities areas that the children would be engaged with. School staff and our youth voice session helped this.
- At the event - making sure school staff didn't interfere and start leading activities because the children were 'playing their way'. Teachers confessed they found this difficult.
- Making schools aware that the SSP staff were not being lazy, they were just supervising not leading the activities.
- The weather was a challenge. If it has rained more then we would have had to cancel. It was extremely windy day, which was hard work for the children but it didn't detract from a great day.

Our ongoing challenge will be for schools to understand the concept of 'Playing Their Way'. Now they have seen it in action we are hopeful that it will continue in the right situation.



Top Tips for replicating this project



- **Co design** - Make sure you work with your schools and obviously the children from the target audience to design what your project looks like.
- **Play Their Way** - Keep it informal. Give the children the equipment and some simple guidance for rules and let them know they can change it to make it better (if they want).
- **Use your local assets** - Doing physical activity on the beach is so much fun. However, you might not have this asset in your SGO area. Think of places that are accessible to children and families in your area and hold it there, showing children what you could do in this venue. Encouraging families to go back in their own time.
- **Staff event** - Hosting a staff event ever so often inspires staff to be active too. They realise how much fun it can be. It is also great promotion for the work you do.
- **Follow up certificates** - Ensuring messages go home about the festival is essential for families to go back and do the same in their own time. We did this through a certificate with information on the back.

Sustainability Moving Forward



The 'Play Their Way' campaign is now fully understood by our PE Subject Leaders. Some have started to embed it in to their informal play, encouraging children to design their own games.

We will continue to use this approach embedded into some of the activities in our festivals. We will have some activities led and some where they can just 'play their way'. We will start to collect feedback from both staff and pupils to see what they like and dislike about both approaches.

Running a festival on the beach is much more accessible now the Beach Base has toilets, so we will use this asset more in the future too.



Impact Collection

The main aim of the project was for school staff to understand the concept of the 'Play Their Way' campaign. Increasing enjoyment in physical activity if staff and adults allow children to play their way. It was evident that the PE Subject Leaders we worked with to co-design the event really understood the concept. The event on the beach brought this to life for those PE Subject Leaders and other staff from the schools. Our conversations with staff highlighted to us that they found it hard not to get involved but have realised that they need to do this more. Some even said they would like to do it more on the beach too.

Our Visitor Book collected staff and pupils comments too (see final page for a flavour).

Next academic year we will be able to track if this is happening in more schools and we will also adopt the approach in more of our events.

Innovation Funding - what does it mean to us and should it change?

The Innovation funding from Tees Valley Sport has encouraged the SGOs in Tees Valley to think of a new project, as a minimum, each year. The learning from these projects across the county has been great. With many of them acting as case studies for the School Games and being presented at the National summit as good practice. SGOs do not receive a publicly funded budget to be very innovative. This is a great support to us locally and I wouldn't want to see it end. SGOs should just be encouraged to try new things to get more children active and make sure all learning is shared.



Play Their Way: www.playtheirway.org Partners:



Visitor Book Comments:

A lovely morning for
all the children.
Great to see the
team work. Thank
you

Great fun, it's lovely
to see all the
children having fun
on the beach.

A fantastic event! Children
and staff thoroughly
enjoyed it! Children worked
independently and had the
best time! We hope this
becomes a regular event.
Thank you. John Batty.

A lovely morning on the beach
- the children loved it! Great
to have time to be creative!
Thank you! PE Lead,
Dormanstown

Such a lovely idea -
the children really
enjoyed it! Great to
see the children have
so much fun 😊
Thank You!
Bankfields

Brilliant fun - a wonderful
chance to play with the
children and just enjoy being
together! Dormanstown DHT

The best day of
my life.
Alfie

A gorgeous fun-filled
morning. Lovely
chance to play on
the beach with the
children!

Children thoroughly
enjoyed the experience.
Loved every minute. So
much fun and very well
organised. Thank you so
much Wheatlands 😊

Lovely morning which
allowed the children to
express themselves.
Thank you - Coatham

Lots of fun
activities.
Whale Hill

The children have
absolutely enjoyed
their day. Thank you.

It's been fun!
Lotte

A nice range of
activities - good ideas.
Very dependent on
weather. Nice to have
new games - Volleyball.

We love the
collaboration with our
teams. We adore
teamwork.
Grangetown Pupil.

Thanks for
everything you all
do.
Team Zetland
xx

My Favourite was
Tug of War because
it was great
teamwork and I have
never done it before.

I've enjoyed the sand
and all the games.
Phoebe

I love it! It is not
raining 😊 Really
energising. Pupil