

A photograph of children playing outdoors. In the foreground, a boy in a green and white striped shirt is laughing and holding hands with a girl in a pink and white striped shirt who is jumping rope. In the background, another child is hula hooping. The scene is set in a paved area with trees and a fence in the distance. The image has orange decorative triangles in the top right and bottom left corners.

Break/Play Times - A Snapshot Survey of Children and Young People in Wales

Children's Commissioner for Wales

May 2024

**Comisiynydd
Plant Cymru**

**Children's
Commissioner
for Wales**



Introduction

During May 2024 we asked children and young people for their views on their break/ play times in school.

The survey was part of an ongoing series of topical questions we ask children and young people monthly to hear their views on a variety of issues, called Monthly Matters. It was shared directly with all schools signed up to our children's rights schemes for primary and secondary schools, as well as community groups.

As part of the survey pack, children and young people were shown a video introducing the topic, and they were asked to consider some questions about their break/ play times in school, including what they enjoyed, why they thought it was important and why they might have to miss their breaks/playtime. We suggested in our session outline that following this video, children and young people should have time to discuss their views with each other before answering the survey.

Schools had two options for completing the survey; children and young people could either do it independently, or a teacher could complete the survey on behalf of the group, answering a different set of questions to give an overview of the discussion.

In total, 1290 individual children and young people answered the survey. A further 1020 children took part in groups, with teachers and youth workers submitting a summary of their views. We received responses from 21 local authority areas. A broad range of ages took part, from children under the age of 7, to 17-year-olds.

Questions were developed by the Commissioner's experienced staff team based on themes that had emerged from previous engagement exercises with children, young people, professionals, and following advice from Play Wales.

Questions for children and young people

Do you enjoy play/break time in school?

Yes (1213) - 96%

No (70) - 6%

If they said they enjoyed play/break time, children and young people were asked:

What do you enjoy?

The most common answers fell under the following themes:

- Spending time with friends
- Playing sports
- Relaxing and having a break from schoolwork

If they said they didn't enjoy play/break time, children and young people were asked:

Why don't you enjoy it?

The most common answers fell under the following themes:

- It's not much fun/nothing to do
- Not having enough time
- It's boring

Do you think play/break time is important?

Yes (1207) - 95%

No (65) - 5%

If they thought play/break time was important, children and young people were asked:

Why do you think it's important?

The most common answers fell under the following themes:

- Having fresh air
- Having a break from lessons/the classroom
- Spending time with friends

Do you ever have to miss your play/break time?

No (685) - 54%

Yes (593) - 46%

If said they'd had to miss their play/break time, children and young people were asked:

Why do you sometimes have to miss your play/break time? How does this make you feel?

The most common answers fell under the following themes:

- Used as a consequence/punishment
- Feelings of sadness, annoyance, and frustration
- To catch up on unfinished work

What would make play or break time better for you?

The most common answers fell under the following themes:

- More time
- More play equipment
- More sports and games

Questions for teachers

Where teachers responded on behalf of a group, their answers reflected the answers given by children directly. Teachers were also able to give their own perspective and experiences

in the following question:

Please tell us about any barriers you face in giving pupils the play/break time they need

The most common answers fell under the following themes:

- A lack of resources and equipment
- Time constraints
- Pressures related to teaching and delivering the curriculum

Conclusion

- Play is integral to children's development, and a specific human right under the UN Convention on the Rights of the child (Article 31). It's clear that children and young people recognise the importance of play and break time in school, and value their play and break time for a wide variety of reasons.

- Echoing [research on this issue](#), almost half of the children who took part in our survey said they sometimes had to miss their play time, mainly as a result of not finishing work or as a consequence of poor behaviour. They felt sad, annoyed, and frustrated because of this.

- When asked about barriers in providing children with the playtime they need, teachers spoke about a lack of resources and time, and pressures related to delivering their curriculum. Children also wanted more time and equipment when asked about making play time better.

There are existing resources and reports to help teachers promote the right to play in their school. You can find links to these resources and reports on [this Play Wales web page](#).