

PEN PICTURE: Licketyspit's Storyplay Schools Programme

Licketyspit's *Storyplay Schools Programme* is rooted in children and actors' shared expertise at play. The company takes highly trained actor-pedagogues into schools and nurseries to nurture a children's rights-based, language, music and story-rich culture across a school community.

Everyone has an innate capacity to be creative and we know that children learn best through play. Storyplay uses group drama-led play sessions to support children to leap into literacy, story, song, poem-making and performance. Storyplay builds on what is already there but often hidden by group dynamics, inhibitions, anxiety about doing things 'wrong' or 'looking stupid'.

Timetabled sessions include dressing-up, blanket play, reflective drawing, story, song and rhyme creation and story-making. Sessions are also used as catalysts for creative writing, visual art and performance, and to support continuing child-led Playground Play. The work can be used as a stimulus across the whole curriculum, fostering a confident story-filled culture enabling children to grow, flourish and attain. Storyplay also develops drama and play-based skills for teachers, parents and carers, and makes it easy and fun for children, families and teachers to discover, reclaim and explore their imaginations through playing together.

The greatest impact of the work is inside the child, where it can open up their capacity to imagine and the realisation that what really matters is who we are, not what we have or where we live. Parents are included in this journey through intergenerational play and food and by visiting a Storyplay Assembly or seeing their child on film and in person in the immersive theatre piece *LicketyLeap*. The programme strengthens school home connections and - child-led - families can continue this 'play' at home,

Crucially, Storyplay is an asset-based approach which brings out the best in every participant. Teacher evaluations since 2016 in primary schools in areas of high disadvantage in Glasgow and Edinburgh suggest it is having what is described as an 'accelerated impact' on children's confidence, social skills, emotional literacy and resilience and use and knowledge of language. Children with English as an additional language and additional support needs frequently demonstrate dramatic change. Storyplay can foster a joyful commonality, a sense of belonging and of tangible possibility, love and hope that can support children to flourish and overcome barriers to attainment.

More about Licketyspit: <https://www.licketyspit.com/>

Impact and how to get *Storyplay*:

<https://www.licketyspit.com/professionals-2/projects/storyplay-schools/storyplay-impact/>

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Case Study 1:

Sara (Primary 2) - LicketyLeap participant

Sara is an additional support for learning (ASL) child with several adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). She was very nervous about coming to LicketyLeap and got very upset after being sent up to the session on her own with one of the Licketyspit Actor-Pedagogues. The next day she came back with one of the teachers she knows well and participated in the whole session! She was still nervous at the start and sitting on the teachers lap, watching the peek-a-boo with some apprehension and distrust, but by the arrival of the Oogly Boogly (Scene 2), she had been won round and was increasingly relaxed, smiling, laughing and clapping her hands with glee.



Sara participated fully and enthusiastically in the rest of the session, looking to the Actor-Pedagogues and teacher for reassurance and showing increasing confidence throughout. She helped the teacher hold up the blue-sea silk and then went into the sea and found 'chocolate treasure!' She loved cooking her fish on the Fire and stopped someone else putting their foot in the Fire saying 'hot!' She also said her name in the Cave without hesitation and patted the Bear (a big move considering her previous behavior). In Session 2, she was again even more confident, actively engaged and laughing out loud – a total transformation!

Case Study 2:

Daniel is a Primary 5 child in a Storyplay School.

Daniel has global developmental delay, struggled with basic literacy, and had become very disheartened by school, often feeling he wasn't as good as the others in his class.

He quickly transformed when he began playing with Licketyspit in Storyplay; there was a visible relaxation in his body language and a huge smile on his face. By the end of the session, he was talking and leading in the games, and was delighted at his own ability to make his class laugh and be fully involved in the same game together. He realised he was just as good as everyone else in the circle.

After the play session, we asked all of the pupils to draw a picture of their favourite part of the session. Daniel raced back into class and began drawing a picture of a granny character he had created in one of the games. Next, he asked his teacher to write out details about the granny ('she wore a huge, old smelly cardigan'). He then copied the sentences into his own handwriting and felt empowered enough to stand up in front of his whole class and read it, out loud, to them all.

The games allowed Daniel to forget he struggled with reading, writing or other kinds of desk-based work. He got so absorbed and inspired by the world he had created in the games and was so excited about it that he overcame his habitual lack of confidence about drawing, writing and speaking out. This has directly informed Licketyspit's practice in schools and is now a task pupils frequently do after playing our 'Granny' games.