



# STARCATCHERS

**How do you feel when the school bell rings?**

**Out of School Care in Scotland  
Consulting with young children age 4 - 6**



## About Starcatchers

Starcatchers is Scotland's National Arts and Early Years Organisation, specialising in creating exceptional arts and creative experiences for babies, toddlers and young children aged 0-5.

We create beautiful live theatre, dance and music performances, and arts installations working with artists who specialise in work for the under 5s; deliver engagement projects across Scotland, placing artists directly into communities; and provide professional development for artists and early years practitioners to develop practice using arts and creativity with very young children.

[www.starcatchers.org.uk](http://www.starcatchers.org.uk)

## Report authors

### Matt Addicott

Matt Addicott is a performance maker, theatre director and dramaturg. In addition to his freelance practice Matt also works as a programmer at Platform, an arts centre based in the east end of Glasgow.

He first worked with Starcatchers in 2007, performing in *Little Light* created by Andy Manley and Vanessa Rigg and was Starcatchers Artist in Residence at Platform in Easterhouse, Glasgow between 2009 and 2011. A regular contributor to the Creative Skills programme, Matt is proud to be a Starcatchers Associate Artist and in 2019 has also led Playspace sessions for Starcatchers' artist development programme and participated in the recent Erasmus+ project.

### Geraldine Heaney

Geraldine Heaney is a Glasgow-based film-maker, artist, freelance enthusiast and adventurer. She has worked with a multiple artists and organisations, and is a member of Sprog Rock, a band that create gigs for under 5s and their friends and families.

She often leads sessions at Platform's Playcafe, has hosted story sessions for Edinburgh International Book Festival and Craigmillar Literacy trust and is a regular contributor to SPACE//WEAN a DIY Zine for under 5s. Geraldine is a Co-founder of independent record label KOR! Records, which creates music projects with young people who have additional support needs.

## Contents

<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Approach</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Challenges</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Key findings</b>	<b>10</b>
What is Out of School Care?	10
Autonomy and agency	10
Flexible and responsive	11
Home from home?	11
Learning and teaching	11
Physical play indoors and outdoors	12
A nurturing environment with trusted adults	12
<b>Appendix 1</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Appendix 2</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Appendix 3</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Appendix 4</b>	<b>19</b>

# Executive Summary

Starcatchers is Scotland's National Arts and Early Years Organisation, providing exceptional arts experiences to support improved outcomes for our youngest children.

In November 2019, two Starcatchers artists visited three primary schools and one nursery setting to engage young children in the Scottish Government's consultation on the Out of School Care draft framework.

Through creative, open-ended play and expressive arts activities, the artists facilitated responses from the children about their feelings, needs, wants, worries and expectations in relation to Out of School Care.

The children's responses, verbal and non-verbal, were observed and recorded, and a number of strong and recurring themes emerged including: a desire for autonomy and agency; a need for services to be flexible and responsive; the importance of physical and energetic play; and the importance of creating environments that are nurturing, with trusted adults.



# Context

The Scottish Government opened a consultation on the Out of School Care draft framework in August 2019, seeking to shape future policies based on the impact upon those who benefit from them, and resulting in a strategic framework by the end of the parliamentary term.

The consultation sought to engage with children, parents, carers, professionals and experts, asking them to think about the opportunities for children to play and enjoy life-enhancing experiences, while supporting parents in work, training or study.

The Out of School Care team from the Scottish Government approached Starcatchers, Scotland's National Arts and Early Years Organisation, to engage directly with very young children in effective, age-appropriate and imaginative ways to ensure their voices were reflected in the consultation.

Recognising that all children, including early years children, have rights in the decision-making about their lives and their futures, is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, currently being adopted into domestic law in Scotland.



# Approach

Two Starcatchers artists, supported by senior Starcatchers staff, worked with over 100 children aged between 4 and 6-years-old across a three-week period in Autumn 2019.

We asked the children *How do you feel when the school bell rings?*

Through creative, open-ended play and expressive arts activities, we facilitated responses from the children about their feelings, needs, wants, worries and expectations in relation to Out of School Care.

Our approach was characterised by:

- **Open-ended, curious questions**
- **A genuine desire to listen to and record whatever children had to say**
- **Opportunities where verbal and non-verbal communication were valued**
- **The use of the expressive arts as a vehicle for children to communicate their ideas in a creative, improvisatory way**
- **Flexibility from the outset to ensure evidence gathered complemented a child-led approach.**

Our key findings are drawn from playing alongside the children, active listening, observing non-verbal as well as non-verbal cues, and ensuring that adult frames of reference support rather than guide our interpretations.

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We visited each participating setting twice and, where possible, worked with the same groups of children for both visits.

During the first visit to each setting Starcatchers worked with:

- **Kincaidston Primary: 19 children P1-2 (3 groups of 6 plus 3 early years children)**
- **Dalmilling Primary: 28 children P1-2 (4 groups of 10 then 3 groups of 6)**
- **St Rose of Lima Primary 45 children P1-2 (6 groups)**
- **Buchlyvie Nursery 8 pre-school children as one group**

During the second visit:

- **Kincaidston Primary: 18 children P1-2 (3 groups of 6)**
- **Dalmilling Primary: 24 children P1-2 (4 groups of 6)**
- **St Rose of Lima Primary: 12 children P1-2 (4 groups of 3)**
- **Buchlyvie Nursery: 8 pre-school children as one group**

Our first visit to each setting took the form of an open-ended, play-based conversation.

We explained to the children that we're familiar with what kind of things happen at school and at home, but would like to know more about what happens between school and home.

We talked about where the children go, what they did there, what they enjoyed and what they'd like to see and do more of. We asked how they felt at the end of the school day.

All conversations were recorded, and in some cases filmed, after checking with the children first that they were happy for this to happen.

After the conversations, the children had the opportunity to draw and reflect on their drawings.



During our second visit, we invited the children to think about what a club or care setting might be like if they were in charge.

Through improvisatory drama play, we invited them to consider who worked in each of these locations, what rules, if any, they felt it was important to embrace or disregard, who the setting was for and what you could get up to there.

Again, these sessions were recorded, and in some cases filmed, after checking with the children first that they were happy for this to happen.

Ensuring all the children had opportunities to engage in drawing and also imaginative play, role-playing and drama helped ensure all involved were able to express their thoughts and ideas in ways that are meaningful to them.

The images they created and their movements, gestures, facial expressions and non-verbal vocalisations all provided valued contributions to the sessions.

Exploring complex topics and emotions through creative play and the expressive arts helps to alleviate pressure for young children to be confident with their verbal language skills.

At this early age, even those who are talking fluently are still developing the ability to articulate their thoughts, feelings and needs in ways which others can fully understand.

### Interpreting evidence

As we observe the responses of children, who were all at an early stage in their social and emotional cognition and still developing language skills, it is important to tread a careful line between interpreting their behaviours and comments without imposing an adult perspective on what they are expressing.

It's important to keep this balance in mind when reading the children's comments (see Appendices) or watching the short films.

**We invited the children to think about what a club or care setting might be like if they were in charge.**

**Exploring complex topics and emotions through the expressive arts helps to alleviate pressure for young children to be confident with their verbal language skills**

## Challenges

### Group size

Very early in the process we discovered that the number of people in a group really affected the conversation and were flexible in finding the right balance of children to help them feel we were really listening to them, and valuing their contributions.

### Physical environment

Venue space also had a significant impact on our meetings with a real range of spaces offered, from dedicated rooms to corridor spaces and small offices. Creative approaches to engaging with children are inherently adaptable, and so we made the most of each session.

Regardless of the natural limitations within sessions, it came across clearly that all conversations and expressions contained value and meaning.



# Key findings

All conversations and expressions were rich and illuminating. It was a real joy to spend time with the children and get a sense of their values and interests.

During these sessions there was a real range of responses. Lots of children engaged with Out of School Care before and after school and were happy to chat at length about what they enjoyed and found challenging.

Whilst it was clear that some children were not currently engaging with Out of School Care or any extra-curricular clubs and activities, everybody had something to offer. They provided interesting contributions and the same key themes emerged in their responses as with the children already experiencing Out of School Care.

Through our observations from each session and the evidence gathered through audio recordings, film, and the children's drawings, the following recurring and strong themes emerged:

## What is Out of School Care?

Given that many Out of School Care settings are in school buildings, we observed it is sometimes difficult for the children to separate what happens during the school day with what follows on the same site i.e. many regarded Out of School Care as the same as school.

## Autonomy and agency

We observed a craving for autonomy and agency – a desire from the children for a space that they could shape and control. This is evidenced throughout the films and recordings, and backed up by and backed up by GIRFEC principles, meeting wellbeing indicators such as Respected and Included.

*“Imagination is the future and it comes true”*

*“You play games, games like musical chairs, musical statues and you can't play on your phone”*

## Flexible and responsive

There is a desire from children for Out of School Care settings to be flexible and responsive, unrestricted from a set timetable or menu of activities. As observed, perhaps most notably in the play filmed at Kincaidston, the children move rapidly from 'sleep' to 'go crazy'. This links with the previous observation about children having agency to shape their experiences to fit their needs, which continually shift throughout the session/week/year.

## Home from home?

Lots of children expressed a desire to spend time with their family with lots of mentions of parents, siblings and grandparents. Out of School Care settings are already working to manage these emotions and expectations, so our observation would be that this is an area of high priority for children and worthy of recognition.

## Learning and teaching

There were many children who expressed a desire to learn and teach. Active learning is central to Curriculum for Excellence, and giving children opportunities to lead learning experiences and learn collaboratively strengthens their sense of agency and intrinsic motivation to learn. Out of School Care settings offer opportunities for peer-sharing, role-playing new ideas and experiences, and discussing with a trusted adult, all of which support active learning and attainment.

*“All colours – intergalactic fun club for everyone to enjoy”*



## Physical play indoors and outdoors

Play and playing is dearly-loved and ever-present.

Many children showed in their behaviours and their words a desire for physical play and energetic activities. Before and after school hours present a golden opportunity for children to enjoy the therapeutic benefits of being active, both indoors and outdoors. Out of School Care settings may like to consider a mix of both adult-directed games and free-play that are in a safe and age-appropriate environment. The benefits of physical exercise on learning, self-regulation and health are well documented and could positively benefit school and home.

It was particularly revealing to listen and watch a group of young boys articulate a desire to 'fight and wrestle' one another after school, clearly in possession of a great deal of energy and showing that despite the negative connotations to physical aggression, Out of School Care providers may find it useful to consider opportunities for physical play that is safe and age-appropriate.

## A nurturing environment with trusted adults

The children really enjoyed spending time with trusted adults outside of the classroom and home. The films evidence the positive relationships built on active and non-judgemental listening, supporting children's rights. Our observation is that free-flow, open-ended creative play is one of the most effective ways to demonstrate to children their voices are important.

Our conversations often veered into interesting and challenging topics such as violence and bereavement. An observation would be that Out of School Care could (and almost certainly does already) offer an exciting space for children and adults to share, exchange and challenge one another on complex subjects.

Without exception, the children created caring, nurturing and safe environments.



# Appendix 1

We recorded a large amount of verbal feedback during sessions. This appendix contains a selection of some of the children's own words and responses to a range of questions:

- How do you feel at the end of the school day?
- What activities do you already do?
- What would Out of School Care look like if you were in charge?
- What would you call it?
- Is there anything to eat or drink?

## How do you feel at the end of the school day?

There was a real mix of responses to the question of 'how do you feel at the end of the school day?' Most children said that they felt happy and excited to return home:

*"Excited as it's home time"*  
*"Happy – don't like school"*  
*"Happy as I like school and going home"*  
*"Sometimes it's annoying"*

Others also said they were sad to leave school and their classmates at the end of the day:

*"I feel bad because I like school and I like seeing my friends"*



What activities do you already do outside of the home, before or after school?

<i>"Park with friends"</i>	<i>"Toy library"</i>	<i>"Or ASDA"</i>
<i>"Go with Mum and Dad to the park"</i>	<i>"Dancing, singing and making stuff"</i>	<i>"Gymnastics Club"</i>
<i>"Take the cats to the vet"</i>	<i>"Playing with my jigsaws"</i>	<i>"Boxing Club"</i>
<i>"We stay in school and play inside and go outside to play"</i>	<i>"Holidays"</i>	<i>"Gymnastics Club"</i>
<i>"Extra playing"</i>	<i>"Ballerina - you have to dance, you have to copy the big people and do spins, jumps, cart-wheels to every single song"</i>	<i>"Football Club"</i>
<i>"Learn new stuff, try new things"</i>	<i>"Football - I like tackling, I like tackling the big people"</i>	<i>"Swimming Club"</i>
<i>"ICT, it is exciting to type and record things"</i>	<i>"After school club"</i>	<i>"Kayaking"</i>
<i>"I go to my Gran's"</i>	<i>"Breakfast club - you get biscuits, cookies, milk"</i>	<i>"Care Club"</i>
<i>"After school I sometimes go to the beach, go to the park, have a race with my friends"</i>	<i>"Dancing Club"</i>	<i>"Rainbows"</i>
<i>"I go to the shops"</i>	<i>"Out to play"</i>	<i>"You draw and stuff"</i>
<i>"Dancing"</i>	<i>"Women's Hub"</i>	<i>"Draw cars and stuff"</i>
<i>"Swimming"</i>	<i>"You go and get ice-cream and pizza"</i>	<i>"Just do things, get badges"</i>
<i>"The gym - I lift heavy weights"</i>	<i>"You go to Pirate Pete's"</i>	<i>"Having fun all day"</i>
<i>"Play games"</i>	<i>"You can go to the beach"</i>	<i>"Learn new things"</i>
<i>"Sport"</i>	<i>"Or the park"</i>	<i>"Stay up late"</i>
<i>"Straight home"</i>	<i>"Get pizza"</i>	<i>"At the Domain you play ping pong, X Box, open only on Fridays"</i>
<i>"Play games"</i>	<i>"Go to Tesco"</i>	<i>"Karate"</i>
		<i>"School club - you learn music."</i>

What would Out Of School Care look like if you were in charge?

<i>"You can just go to a different house when you're lost. Or a hotel. A hotel with a pool or a hot tub. A chocolate hotel. Chocolate world, chocolate space. Chocolate World Hotel"</i>	<i>"Imagination is the future and it comes true"</i>	<i>"Wear a blue suit"</i>	<i>"They're playing games, play tag, playing games at Fortnite club"</i>
<i>"You could go to Spain - the shop in Spain"</i>	<i>"Ride on a bike till you can't anymore"</i>	<i>"I speak Polish and Gaelic and French"</i>	<i>"Car Parking - driving lessons"</i>
<i>"Whole world and space made of chocolate"</i>	<i>"Just sit there. Just sit there on the street and get ice-cream when you want it"</i>	<i>"Having fun - you have fun and enjoy being together - red team and blue team together"</i>	<i>"Have to give me money [to get in] it's £100 a time"</i>
<i>"The inside is made of wood, the outside made of brick and stone"</i>	<i>"Eat my breakfast"</i>	<i>"Get your lunch"</i>	<i>"No babies allowed. No parents allowed. No dogs allowed."</i>
<i>"At lunch we play games, make dreams come true"</i>	<i>"Eat lunch after school"</i>	<i>"You play games, games like musical chairs, musical statues and you can't play on your phone"</i>	<i>"I'm drawing Fortnite - Xbox and PS4"</i>
<i>"Anybody can join, you don't pay"</i>	<i>"Going to London"</i>	<i>"100 people can go"</i>	<i>"Unicorn things, ice cream things, all things"</i>
<i>"A piano. There is a piano"</i>	<i>"Eat in the dinner hall"</i>	<i>"1,000,000,000 can go"</i>	<i>"There are princess books, diamond books"</i>
<i>"They two are doing weights - all colours - intergalactic fun club for everyone to enjoy"</i>	<i>"Boxing"</i>	<i>"It lasts 100 minutes"</i>	<i>"Cleaning - you have to do lots of the cleaning"</i>
<i>"Playground with lots of swings and slides, climbing wall and roundabout"</i>	<i>"Football, score goals and play matches"</i>	<i>"1 million and five minutes"</i>	<i>"Be kind - because they might get sad"</i>
	<i>"A parrot for a pet?"</i>	<i>"Yeah - it's open before and after"</i>	<i>"There is a bad room. Break the rules room. Have fun in the fun room. No taking off the shoes room"</i>
	<i>"Dancing - we do practices for a show"</i>	<i>"Looks fun - looks like bowls"</i>	
	<i>"Next to the old racecourse, it's the old racecourse golf club"</i>	<i>"Everyone is six and seven or eight - the same age"</i>	
	<i>"Dancing party - no singing, just dancing"</i>		
	<i>"You have to be younger than ten to get in"</i>		



## What would you call it?

*“Dragon School. I would call it Dragon School – there is a hotel with dragon, hotel with my mummy, hotel with a ramp, with a skateboard a hot tub and a pool”*

*“Trampoline club with 100 trampolines”*

*“Teacher Club – when you teach everyone – I teach my cousins”*

*“Fat club – where fat people come and I teach them not to eat so much”*

*“Library club – toys and Halloween stuff – Christmas stuff”*

*“Mickey Mouse Adventure Club”*

*“Funday Adventure Club”*

*“Before Club and After Club”*

*“Football Club”*

*“Kickboxing”*

*After school club”*

*“Rainbows”*

*“Children’s hub”*

*“Horse-riding club – we do jumps”*

*“Laser tig club – when you shoot people and the button goes red”*

*“Thursdays at Pirate Pete’s”*

*“Party in the Elevator”*

*“Have a party in the elevator flossing club”*

*“Theme Park Rollercoaster”*

*“Toy club – you play, you play with toys”*

*“It’s called After School Club and you don’t play, there is just an exercise bike and that is it”*

*“You make things but you don’t go every day – I’m right in the middle, it’s called Fast Club”*

*“There are robots at Paint Club”*

*“My after school club is only allowed aliens in it”*

*“It’s all about lols – it’s the LOL Clubhouse – you can go in the car – me, my mum, dad, Lawson and Maisey – we all go”*

*“Fortnite, Minecraft Club”  
“Colourful Club – it’s really colourful, you write your names, colour or draw your hand – get tattoos, no rules”*

*“Book Club”*

*“Make Up Club – nail polish”*

*Jam Club – it’s built out of ice cream, sun would melt it”*

*“Princess Club – you get dresses”*

*“Pet Club”*

*“Love Club”*

*“Campervan Club”*

*“Ice Cream Club”*

*“Vampire Club”*

*“Joke Club”*

*“Halloween Party”*

*“Disco dance party”*

*“Football club”*

*“Dancing club”*

*“Gymnastics”*

*“Ballet”*

*“Having Fun club”*

*“There is a Princess room in it, a bedroom, running room, rainbow, the way to get out it’s called the All the Things Club”*

## Is there anything to eat or drink?

*“Eat sweets”*  
*“There’s a staff. They help with food and drink. There is a choice of snacks, sandwiches”*  
*“Blueberries”*  
*“Strawberries”*  
*“Pizza”*  
*“Cupcakes”*  
*“Lots of food, chicken and pizza and onions”*  
*“Inside there is lots of food and board games, outside there are bouncy castles”*  
*“Pancake”*  
*“Chicken for snack”*  
*“Pancakes drop from the sky”*  
*“There are breakfast bars, TV and lots and lots of colouring in”*  
*“Sometimes go to breakfast, place where you go to get toast. Cereal and juices. After you play basketball or football.”*  
*“We work there”*  
*“You can order food and bring it to them”*

## Appendix 2

Accompanying this report are four short, password-protected films which can be viewed at the links below. Passwords are supplied separately or on request (info@starcatchers.org.uk):

St Rose Lima - <https://vimeo.com/376781480>

Buchlyvie - <https://vimeo.com/377052150>

Dalmillig - <https://vimeo.com/377052616>

Kincaidston - <https://vimeo.com/377053147>

# Appendix 3

Transcript of conversation between Matt, Geraldine and the children at Buchlyvie Nursery

**Child 1:** On Monday I go to \*\*\*\* Club and work with James and Danielle – they teach us switch

**Child 1:** Climbing, Taekwondo comes in?

**Child 2:** I go to Taekwondo

**Geraldine:** Yes

**[Child 1 then performs some switches – moving his right leg forward, left leg back and then switching quickly between the two]**

**Child 5:** I like doing things with my parents

**Child 1:** Hungry

**Blake:** I like Taekwondo and playing

**Child 4:** Good ‘cause I get to go to the shops

**Matt:** How does it feel to go to \*\*\*\* Club

**Child 1:** I like playing on the park on the swings with my friends. I like going outside and playing with my friends.

**Child 1:** Feel bad, ‘cause I want to go in nursery

**Child 1:** Feels good. I wear a \*\*\*\* Club suit

**Child 4:** Happy ‘cause I miss my mum

**Child 2:** No snacks at \*\*\*\* Club. They give me a drink.

**Matt:** How do you feel about nursery?

**Child 6:** Happy as I get to go on my trampoline

**Child 3:** Play a lot, play. Playing at the park.

**Child 1:** Good

**Child 2:** Good – then I get to go outside

**Child 4:** So do I

**Matt:** Why?

**Child 3:** Me too

**Child 1:** I went to the park and it had a pink chute

**Child 4:** We play with play-doh

**Child 7:** Bad boys might come and try get into nursery. I’d climb up the roof.

**Child 2:** Climbing up things. I like that.

**Child 3:** We play with toys and read stories

**Child 8:** No, run and hide

**Child 4:** Going on the swings. I like going on the trampoline. I like the slide.

**Child 1:** I like reading books

**Child 8:** Playing movies

**Geraldine:** Anything else?

**Child 1:** When the mummy

**Geraldine:** How do you feel at the end of the day, when nursery is finished?

**Child 7:** Tig

**Child 1:** Pattern game where you read the words out and you

have to make silly sentences

**Matt:** What are the rules?

**Child 1:** The rules are no pushing, no running, no running, no kicking, no shouting, no pushing

**Child 5:** Listening ears and no hitting

**Child 1:** I can show you how to spell no. Don’t run outside in case you fall.

**Child 8:** Nothing

**Geraldine:** Are rules important?

**Child 8:** Yes

**Geraldine:** Why?

**Child 8:** Because! You need to do important things all the time

**Geraldine:** Would you add any new rules?

**All:** No!

# Appendix 4

Settings and dates

**Kincaidston Primary School**

Cranesbill Ct, Ayr, South Ayrshire KA7 3YN

Tuesday 22nd October: 09.30-15.00

Friday 8th November: 09.30-15.00

**Dalmillig Primary School**

Harthall, Ayr, South Ayrshire KA8 0PD

Thursday 24th October: 09:30-12:30

Monday 11th November: 09:30-12:30

**St Rose of Lima Primary School**

295 Mossvale Rd, Glasgow G33 5QS

Wednesday 30th October: 09:30-12:30

Tuesday 12th November: 09:30-12:30

With attention to sensible scheduling, it was also possible to link with Buchlyvie Nursery, a short distance from St Rose of Lima Primary School, to deliver two sessions in the afternoons. This provided Starcatchers with a useful frame of reference for children transitioning from nursery to P1 in conjunction with Out of School Care.



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**Starcatchers, December 2019**

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