

School Based Afterschool Services: Key Issues for the InterDepartmental Group to Consider

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Key Guiding Principles

- 1) Children's Rights – Play, Rest, Voice/Consultation (Art12 CRC)
- 2) Snowball Principle – Success, Failure, Like, Dislike of School
- 3) Child Wellbeing - Avoidance of Warehousing
- 4) Child Wellbeing - Avoidance of Schoolification
- 5) Concern for Individual Differences
- 6) Poverty Prevention and Compensation
- 7) Child Welfare and Protection – Bullying prevention

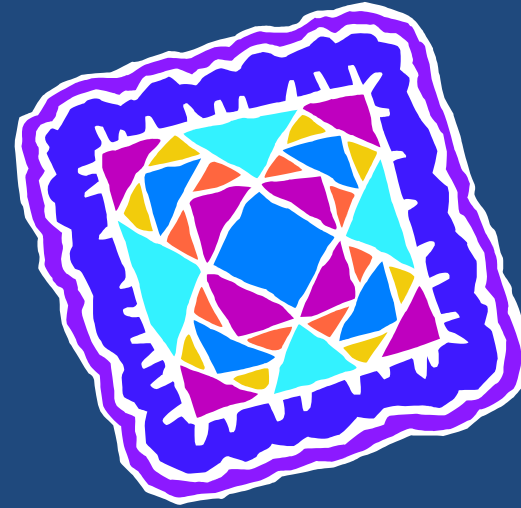
1) *Children's Rights*

Children and young people have a right to play and leisure time under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:

Article 31

1 States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

2 States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.



Concerns are that afterschool care becomes simply more school.

- *Semistructured play

- *Unstructured play

- *Rest

- *Reading



This can be addressed by emphasising the key role of play, including unstructured play, as well as infrastructure investment in schools to ensure different play spaces, quiet rooms, multisensory rooms, soft areas (with beanbags etc), with an emphasis on relaxation.

- *some schools have buildings and a school culture that can easily facilitate these areas with investment – others do not. Some schools already have these spaces in place, many do not.

- *This option of school based afterschool services must closely scrutinise **which school physical and relational environments are or are not best suited to the play and rest needs** of afterschool services.

- *This is an opportunity also for the afterschool sector and environment to have a helpfully transformative effect on the institutional culture and climates of at least some schools.

Opportunities and spaces for children to rest, switch off and have quiet time needs to be centrally embedded in such school facilities.

*This issue of children being too tired is an issue already observed for contexts of socioeconomic exclusion, due to lack of sleep either through stress, hunger, or irregular sleep patterns (Downes & Maunsell 2007); again this is an issue somewhat off the radar of current national policy, given the neglect of such a question on sleep for school going children in the GUI national study and the lack of policy focus on the issue of sleep in the *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures* national strategy for children and young people.

*It is notable that the evaluation of Doodle Den afterschool programme in CDI Tallaght (Biggart et al. 2012) observed concerns that a number of pupils were too tired and were falling asleep before the end of the extra hour and a half beyond school (e.g., pp.43-44).



- 2) *Snowball Principle (Kellaghan et al 1995)–
Success, Failure, Like, Dislike of School*
- 3) *Child Wellbeing - Avoidance of Warehousing*
- 4) *Child Wellbeing - Avoidance of Schoolification*



- *A central commitment to play, rest and relaxation for afterschool care services must be enshrined to ensure this school based approach does not become simply an academic hot-housing, that may be stressful for children and even alienating some from the school system.
- *the extremely long extended school based day in France is associated with dramatically higher alienation of students from school; in PISA (OECD 2012) French students from socioeconomically excluded backgrounds were strikingly 50% below the OECD average in terms of a sense of belonging in school and not feeling like an outsider. Only 38% of socioeconomically excluded students in France agree that they feel like they belong at school (PISA 2012).
- *While this may be due to a wider range of factors than simply the length of the school and afterschool day, nevertheless it is an important cautionary note against an extremely long day in school, stretching for example to 5 or 6pm.

5) *Concern for Individual Differences*

***Introversion** – drawing energy from within (Jung 1921)

More creative, less formulaic in thought, deeper emotions based on Jung (1921) (See also Downes 2003)

***Activity based needs** – associated more with boys needs, less verbal focused activities (Byrne 2007)

Need spaces for sport, physical activities to let off steam...

6) *Poverty Prevention and Compensation* **Food poverty – Hunger prevention in schools centred on needs of child**

*12,661 10-17 year olds in Ireland from randomly selected schools throughout the country (Callaghan et al. 2010), 20.9% of schoolchildren in Ireland report going to school or bed hungry because there is not enough food at home.

Unlike countries such as Britain, France and Poland, Irish schools have poor infrastructure for meals in schools, with little investment historically in kitchen facilities in schools

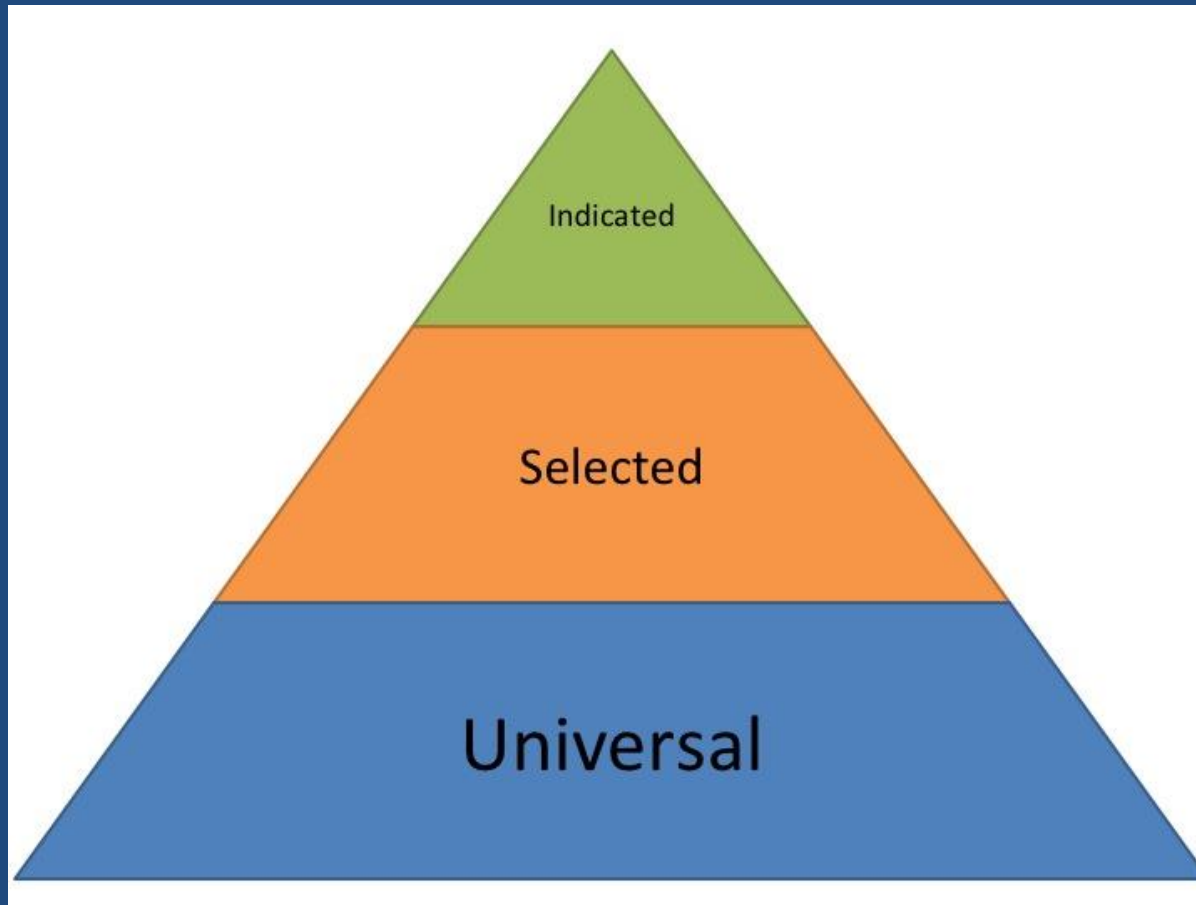
***Poverty** – extended schools model –SuperDEIS intensive supports St. Ultan's Ballyfermot

- Kitchens in schools for warm meals
- 1 person responsible for local coordination of hot meals for both school and afterschool projects



Differentiated Levels of Need for Prevention
see Downes (2014) on this for ESL

ALL, SOME (Moderate risk), FEW (Intensive supports, chronic needs)



7) Child Welfare and Protection – Bullying prevention

- Bullying is a child protection issue (Farrelly 2007)
- Long-term impact on physical and mental health of bullying in school, as well as on educational outcomes (Downes & Cefai 2016)
- Children need to be seen, heard, i.e., listened to but not **listened into**

Out-of-School Services as Part of a Holistic Approach to Prevention of and Intervention in Bullying in School (Downes 2006)

- With the school based afterschool care services, collaboration between schools, after-school projects and other local services are needed to target bullying.
- There is a need for integration of a variety of perspectives and approaches to bullying to ensure continuity of approaches across contexts, and sharing good practice
- Schools and after-school services, in developing and revisiting anti-bullying policies, need to consider the institutional and organisational features of schools and out-of-school projects themselves that can contribute to bullying in the first instance. Again the issue of developing spaces for relaxation and play in the environment of many schools needs to be addressed through a strategic and financial commitment.

Conclusion/Recommendations

*School Based Afterschool **Projects** (i.e., limited in time, 90mins) well established, e.g., School Completion Programme

*School Based Afterschool **Care** (i.e, until 5.30/6pm) largely untested in Ireland, and vulnerable to Warehousing Principle and Snowballing Principle of failure, dislike of school

Within a wider range of options, School based afterschool *care* with funding for dedicated afterschool spaces for **a) rest, b) unstructured play, c) library resources, d) physical activity spaces and e) semi-structured play** could be piloted where schools could apply across: 20 sites nationally and 20 in areas of high poverty as 'superDEIS' models like St. Ultan's Ballyfermot extended school. Subject to evaluation like ABC models, with pupils' feedback

Also fund for wider number of afterschool *projects* (i.e., limited in time, 90 mins) across large number of school settings nationally – some funds for more minor changes to school infrastructure and environments

Continuity of Staff and Career/Professional Development of Staff in Out-of-School Services

Relations of trust between staff and children and young people are vital to psychological wellbeing.

As staff continuity is essential in order for these relations of trust to form the following issues arise:

— The development and implementation of staff retention and recruitment strategies

— The facilitation of a national strategy for staff development and progression examining training and accreditation, employment opportunities and defined career progression in the Out-of-School Service sector (Downes 2006)

*External inspections of school based premises and afterschool relational environments is an obvious need. The lessons of the early years settings regarding poor safety, quality and relational environments in a number of settings need to be also heeded for this sector.

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