

Top tips for Empty Classroom Day

Empty Classroom Day is a day for children everywhere to enjoy learning and playing outside the classroom. On Friday 17 June 2016 schools are pledging to spend at least one lesson in the day outside and Play Wales is encouraging schools to commit the day to play.

Here are our top tips for a playful Empty Classroom Day!

- 1** You don't need a detailed plan of activities. If you can take a step back and supervise from a distance, children will be more likely to play in their own way and gain the benefits of experimenting and experiencing things for themselves.
- 2** Loose parts are defined as natural and man-made materials that have no specific purpose. Ask parents and colleagues to help by collecting resources such as: fabric, guttering, cardboard boxes and tubes, tyres, sticks, tarpaulins, string and rope. Children get very creative when left to play with these resources.
- 3** Children have a fascination with nature so think about resources that allow children to explore the four elements in their play:
 - Earth** – mud pies, sand, clay or digging
 - Air** – kites, bubbles, balloons or flags
 - Fire** – candle decorating, toasting marshmallows or campfire cooking
 - Water** – hosepipes, buckets, sponges or watering cans
- 4** Make sure children are well equipped by informing parents of your plans. Encourage children to wear old clothes and be prepared for whatever the weather.
- 5** Make sure parents understand this is a different sort of day and that their children are likely to get dirty. This is a great opportunity to remind parents that playing outside and getting dirty is really beneficial for children's physical and emotional wellbeing.
- 6** If you provide children with sufficient **time** they will play and get creative. Consider setting at least half of Empty Classroom Day for play.

- 7** If you provide children with sufficient **space**, it will support a range of play experiences. If you have a school field, this is the time to make use of it!
- 8** If you provide children with **permission** to play they are more likely to play in their own way. You may need to agree some broad boundaries with supervising adults but otherwise allow children to decide what is appropriate by stepping back.
- 9** If you have a local play development team, get in touch with them as they may be able to advise you on ideas to make Empty Classroom Day a playful one. You can find out who to contact on Play Wales' website: www.playwales.org.uk/eng/playassociations
- 10** Finally, have fun. Dedicating Empty Classroom Day to play should be fun for children and adults. Step back and observe the incredible experiences children have whilst playing, observe them learning, negotiating and enjoying themselves.



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