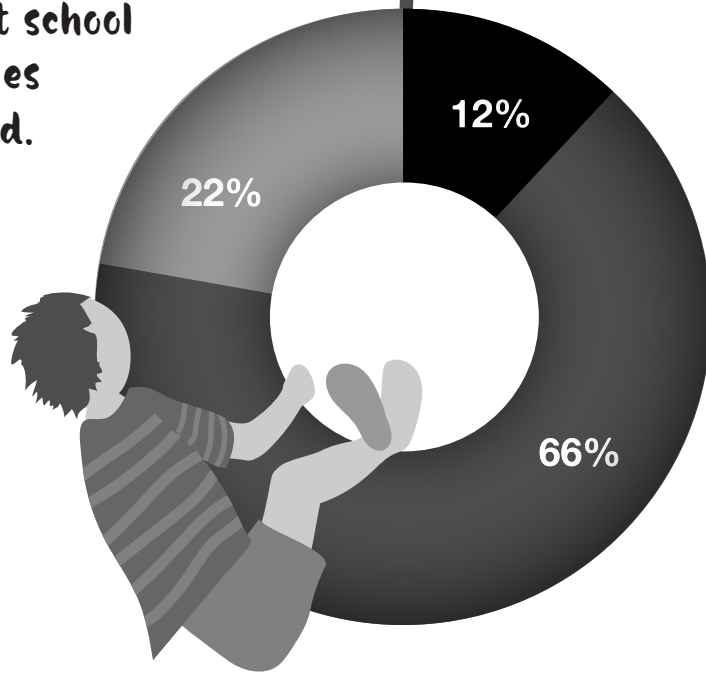


Why Upstart?

The under-sevens learn best through play but Scotland currently introduces formal learning at a very early age compared with the rest of the world. Countries like Finland, Switzerland and the Netherlands, where play-based learning is the norm until six or seven, show superior results in educational achievement and childhood well-being.

Scotland has one of the earliest school starting ages in the world.



School starting ages around the world

4-5 years	12%
6 years	66%
7 years	22%

Only 12% of countries send their children to school before the age of 6 and they're all ex-members of the British empire!

Why play?

Play – active, creative play – is children's inborn learning drive. It's how young human beings develop their interests, resilience, positive attitudes and social behaviour. By giving young children time and place to play, we prepare them for lifelong learning.

In the past, outdoor play of this kind happened naturally but in modern Britain it's increasingly rare. Ironically, as opportunities for play have declined, research is accumulating to show its significance for healthy development.

Research shows that, before the age of seven, there is no long-term advantage in emphasising formal academic achievement over physical, social, emotional and intellectual development. On the other hand, a play-based approach confers many benefits in terms of skills, competencies and personal characteristics that stand children in good stead throughout their lives.

The power of play

- Physical fitness, coordination and control
- Emotional resilience and a 'can do' attitude
- Creativity and problem-solving skills
- Social and communication skills, and teamwork
- Common sense understanding of the world
- A love of learning – and readiness to learn more
- Self-confidence, self-control, self-regulation.

These are the qualities sought by employers ... but frequently found lacking in job applicants, despite their paper qualifications.

What about children's entitlement to state-funded education?

Upstart is campaigning for a change in the ethos of early years education. We are not suggesting any change to children's entitlement. Our aim is to give Scottish children two more years to learn and develop at their own rate before formal class work begins.

Would it mean holding children back?

No. In kindergarten settings, children who show an interest in literacy or numeracy are encouraged and supported, just as they are in a caring family home, where teaching of the three Rs is tailored to each individual's developmental level. Children are also encouraged to take part in outdoor activities, environmental studies, art, music and drama, in order to develop a range of interests.

All the evidence suggests that academic hot housing is counter-productive in the long run and there is no advantage in 'top-down' teaching of skills to children before they're developmentally ready to learn them.

Upstart's supporters include:

David Baxter, former consultant community paediatrician, Highlands Region
David Cameron, Scottish educationist and an architect of Curriculum for Excellence
John Carnochan, co-founder, Scottish Violence Reduction Unit
Theresa Casey, President, International Play Association
John Davis, Professor of Childhood Inclusion, University of Edinburgh
Willie French, Head Teacher, Royal High Primary, Edinburgh
Marguerite Hunter-Blair: CEO Play Scotland
Cathy McCulloch: Founder and Director of The Children's Parliament
Colwyn Trevarthorn, Emeritus Professor of Child Psychology, Edinburgh University
Avril Williamson, Head Teacher, Linthaugh Nursery School, Glasgow
Phil Wilson, Professor of Primary Care and Rural Health, University of Aberdeen
Suzanne Zeedyk, Research scientist, Dundee University

Find out more:

See www.upstart.scot or visit our Facebook page at Upstart Scotland

Email info@upstart.scot for our free monthly newsletter

All research mentioned in this handout and Upstart presentations is fully referenced in the evidence section of www.upstart.scot.

UPSTART

a campaign to introduce a
kindergarten stage
for three- to seven-year-olds



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