

Nottingham Games

Researching Creativity through Play



Thank you for your interest in Nottingham Games!

And thanks to The National Lottery Heritage Fund, whose support has enabled us to invite you to be part of this year-long project (2024-25) to collect and record the games played by children in our city.

This pack is designed to provide
information about:

- the background and aims of the programme
- how to set up the research project with pupils, and what to do at each phase
- how to contribute your school's research to the archive of Nottingham games and to the films and book that we plan to produce.

Nottingham Games Background

Nottingham Games is a pupil research project that sets out to celebrate the games that children play by building a living archive of past and present playground rhymes and games. It will introduce children to the significance of play in our understanding of heritage, culture and traditions. Working in partnership with the City's schools and cultural education providers, our aim is to empower children as researchers to collect, collate and document games, rhymes and playground activities for two films and a book - a compendium of games from different generations, and from the diverse communities of Nottingham, including those from other countries, cultures, languages and traditions.

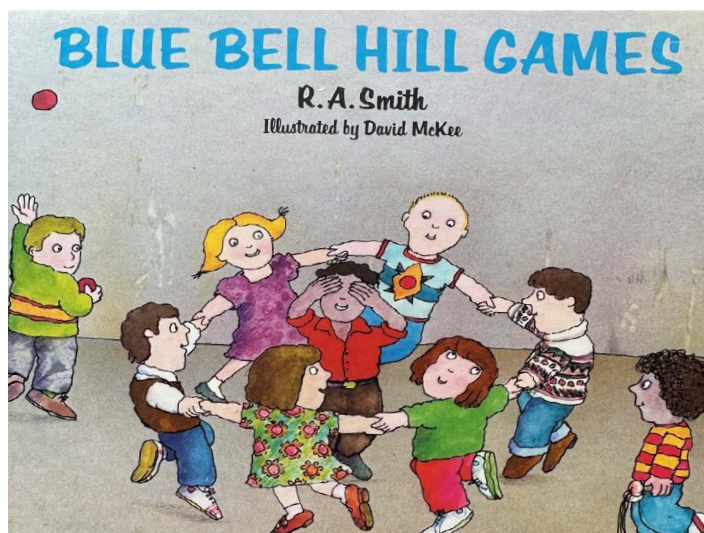
The project is inspired by the 1983 publication, *Blue Bell Hill Games*, which was collated by a Nottingham headteacher to celebrate the games in his school playground.

Central Television also made a documentary film of the games highlighting the inter-generational and multicultural sources of games and rhymes. This is still available to watch here: [Play With Words, Central TV 1983.](#)

To mark the 40th anniversary of the *Blue Bell Hill Games* book and documentary, in 2023 we worked with Year 6 pupils at Blue Bell Hill School in St Anns, who researched the games and rhymes played in the school now. They then worked with a film-maker to produce their own film, which is available here: [Blue Bell Hill Games film.](#)

This inspired the Nottingham Creativity Collaborative to support the making of a second film, at Rosehill School. We wanted to include the important message that children with special educational needs and disabilities, including children with autism, play games too; and that play is an essential part of learning in every context.

The film, made by Sarah Bailey at Rosehill and edited by film-maker Georgianna Scurfield, illustrates how play is incorporated into the learning of their children at all ages. The Rosehill film (Creativity at Rosehill) is available here: therosehillschool.com/virtual-exhibitions/



Nottingham Games draws on partnerships with the UNICEF Child Friendly City programme, City Library Service, UNESCO City of Literature, National Literacy Trust, refugee and migrant support networks, Challenge Cultural Education Partnership, Nottingham Schools Trust and City schools.

The project leads are Rick Hall and Chris Hall. Please contact us if you have any questions or want any help in carrying out the research in your school.

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The Research Project

Phase 1

Getting started

You might like to show the 2023 Blue Bell Hill Games film (9 minutes long) in an assembly or with a targeted class or year group to prompt some interest and discussion across your school about the games that they play.

What games do they recognise? What different variations do they play?
Can they demonstrate some of their games?

The 1983 Central TV film is also available on YouTube (13 minutes long). This could be used to stimulate a discussion about how and why games and rhymes change and how they get handed down across the generations.

You may wish to let the children simply brainstorm games and rhymes on flipchart paper or a whiteboard, and then talk about favourite games and different types of games.


Setting up the research team

Suggestions based on what we did at Blue Bell Hill

- We worked with 12 year 5s (who continued into the start of Y6). (They agreed to work in threes to survey

different year groups: EYFS, Y1&2, Y3&4, Y5&6).

- We discussed how the teams would conduct the survey. (They did it over one week, interviewing children at playtime and by making prearranged visits to different classes in the year groups they were researching. Class teachers helped them facilitate a short discussion and record the findings)
- We helped the children clarify the main research question **‘What games do you play?’** We discussed how questions could be open or closed; discussed and practised how to be kind and encouraging and supportive of children who may be less confident or hesitant; we discussed and practised how to thank participants and show that their contribution was valued.
- We discussed consent and children’s rights not to take part in the research
- We created a **list of prompts** the researchers could use to get more information (Ours were: How do you choose who is it/the chaser? Which chasing games do you play? Do you play any games where you sneak up on someone? Do you play any clapping games and rhymes? Any singing and dancing games? Any games with toys or stones/cards etc? With skipping ropes or elastics? With balls? Any competitions? Games where you pretend to be someone else or somewhere else?)



- If teachers are willing to facilitate some class discussion, it would also be good to ask: Thinking about the different games you like to play, where did you learn them? Did someone tell you or teach you?

Who? Do you know any games that were taught to you by your family or by older generations? Do you know any games in other languages, or from other countries?

Practical resources and suggestions for the survey stage

- Clipboards are helpful if you have them
- You might like the researchers to wear badges when they are conducting the research.
- The researchers need notebooks and pens to record responses.
- The researchers will need help in approaching different class groups or ages, and they may need guidance about the best times to talk to other children.

Analysis

Suggestions based on what we did at Blue Bell Hill

- We began by explaining we needed to 'boil down' the results by putting the games into categories. We discussed what these categories should be.

The categories used in the Bluebell Hill film are: Counting and Choosing Games {also deciding who is it}; Running, Chasing and Jumping Games; Clapping and Handshake Games; Songs and Dances; Playing with Toys.

- The researchers then sorted the findings for their age groups into different categories.
- Together we generated questions about these categories (e.g. which are the most popular types of games at different ages? Amongst girls/boys? Are some games popular regardless of year group? Can we see any patterns in what's happening? Do we have any ideas about why certain types of games are popular?)

Presenting the findings in school

The analysis and reflection from the previous stage will inform the themes and ideas that are reported as the outcomes of the research.

You may want to discuss the format the reporting takes with the pupil researchers - clearly, there's potential for displays, written reports, artwork, assemblies, media documentation...

You may also wish to bring the school together in a Games Day/Week when there is a sharing of a number of the games at playtimes.

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The Research Project

Sharing the findings more widely

Thanks to the support of The National Lottery Heritage Fund we are able to collate the games your children discover into a compendium of Nottingham Games that will be published as a book, in a similar format to the original 1983 publication Blue Bell Hill Games. We'll make sure your school receives a copy of this book for the school library.

Phase 2 (optional, but we hope you'll want to do this...)

Phase 1 is focused on the games that children play now. However, we are also interested in two other sets of questions:

1. Which games do parents, grandparents and other adults in the community remember playing at primary school? Which games have survived, changed or may be nearly lost in history?

2. Is there evidence of games that are derived from the traditions of other cultures and communities and which may be expressed in other languages?

We also intend to make two further films to document the breadth and diversity of Nottingham Games. Again, we will of course share these with you.

To do this, we need you to share with us the findings from your school. You can do this at any point - as the project goes along, or at the end - by email - or we will arrange to visit your school if that is easier.

Many parents and grandparents enjoy reminiscing about the games they played in their childhood, and this could be a rich topic of learning. The times and circumstances in which they played their games may be very different and enlightening to the children at school today.

With these points and questions in mind, we suggest that Phase 2 of the project might involve:

- Sharing the outcomes of the Phase 1 Nottingham Games research with the children's families and with community members (perhaps through a special assembly or an invitation to tea or another celebration);
- Giving the pupil researchers the task of investigating these two further questions with the guests at the games celebrations event.



Again, please let us know if you are planning to do this. And please send us a summary of what the children discover from older generations and about games in their community from other cultures and traditions.

We may be able to support some additional costs; please contact us for details.

Thank you!

Rick Hall and Chris Hall

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