Classrooms where playful pedagogies operate are often characterised by active learning and engagement, language-rich interactions, open-ended questions and humour.

What does it mean to be a playful teacher?
Playful pedagogical practice is enacted through adult-child relationships based on trust, acceptance and a sense of belonging. Playful adult practices encourage young learners to participate, to explore and to experiment with objects and ideas in new and unexpected ways.

Examples of playful practice

*Playful practices may arise from:*
- a science activity growing bean seeds with the question, ‘Imagine if your seed grows strong and as tall as the highest building. What might happen and what would you do?’
- playing with language while sharing a board game with young learners, for example taking a rhyming focus when moving a counter, ‘Oh boo-hoo Mr Blue got two, what about you Red Fred and Mrs Green Bean?’
- using rhyme and alliteration in everyday talk, ‘Oh that dough was icky sticky squishy squashy, now my hands they need a washy’
- combining active movements and games with key concept developments. For example, counting on and counting backwards is reinforced through rocket count-downs and blast off, fishing for numerals or alphabet skittles
- telling a story using a dramatic voice and expressions, and props
- taking an active role in dramatic play with young learners.

What makes an experience playful from a young learner’s perspective?
- The experience invokes young learner’s curiosity and imagination.
- Young learners are agentic and decision makers.
- Learning is active and engaging.
- Classroom experiences afford opportunities to experiment with materials, ideas and the properties of objects, often transforming the use of an object in play.

Creating a playful physical environment

*Teachers consider:*
- providing a wide range of open-ended materials, such as lengths of fabrics in assorted colours and textures, or natural materials
- using classroom space in flexible ways so there are opportunities for young learners to extend their play, for example by creating three dimensional buildings, caves, offices, shops, space ships
- locating resources so that young learners can independently access materials as required for their play.

‘A playful approach tends to reduce stress in the classroom; cultivate joy, pride and self-confidence; and foster social bonding; all of which support efforts to improve executive function and academic achievement.’
