



**this place is like a**  
**BUILDING SITE!**

*A report on the introduction of loose materials  
to three primary schools in North Lanarkshire*

Generations of adults look back fondly at their early experiences of self-directed learning and play in the outdoors, and draw from them many living benefits. Cultivating positive relationships through outdoor learning and play builds cognitive competence, as well as mental well-being and contributes to the holistic development of the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence.

The power of outdoor play is in resourcing an 'in-touch-ness' with the real world through a process that is often untidy, slow and uncomfortable: Essential ingredients in the formation of resilient and adaptive learners. The imaginative activity that accompanies messing about with loose materials forms the basis of creative and resourceful thinking in the arts and sciences. Negotiating changing situations, assessing and managing risk and enjoying the sheer physicality of the outdoors, all promote a sense of well-being and confidence that stands us in good stead for the challenges of an unpredictable future.

Facilitated through the work of Playlink and Grounds for Learning, children and adults in North Lanarkshire have been bringing Curriculum for Excellence alive in their playgrounds and outdoor spaces. Richly playful outdoor experiences live long in the memory, reconnect us to the sustaining rhythms of nature and provide us with multifaceted opportunities to integrate thinking, feeling and knowing. As such, they are gifts for a lifetime and will strengthen North Lanarkshire's communities for generations to come.

**Julie Wilson**

*Education Scotland Outdoor Learning*

## Foreword



# this place *is like a* **BUILDING SITE!**

4	<b>INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND</b>	28	<b>THE CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE</b> About the Curriculum for Excellence. Nests and ephemeral art.	52	<b>APPENDICES</b> The example cost plan for Baird Memorial The Curriculum for Excellence Experiences and Outcomes that relate to play.
8	<b>THE LOOSE MATERIALS TRAINING PROGRAMME</b>	32	<b>SAND AND WATER</b>		
8	The three schools: general description of the way in which we worked with the three schools.	38	<b>LIVING WOODS</b>		The training programme summaries for Thornlie, Banton and Knowetop
10	Hands on loose materials at Knowetop.	40	<b>STORAGE AND ONGOING MAINTENANCE OF MATERIALS</b>		The tool apron
14	Banton cardboard and transport.	42	<b>RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT</b>	59	<b>REFERENCES</b>
16	Making fire at Thornlie.	46	<b>THREE MORE SCHOOLS</b>	59	<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>
18	Co-operation and collaboration and mess at Thornlie.	48	<b>RESOURCES DIRECTORY</b>		
23	The necessity of pennies.	50	<b>FUNDING DIRECTORY</b>		
24	Chalk versus playground markings.				
25	The role of adults.				

*'Play is not a luxury but rather a crucial dynamic of healthy physical, intellectual, and social-emotional development at all age levels.'*



**A Report on the Introduction of Loose Materials to Three Primary Schools in North Lanarkshire**

# Introduction & background

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This is a report of the work commissioned by North Lanarkshire Council's Learning and Leisure Services to support and develop ongoing work in three of its primary schools as part of the Natural Play Project. It is accompanied by a short video of the same name and their main purpose is both to inspire other schools to embark on such work and to give them the practical tools and information to do so.

## CURRENT POLICY AND FUNDING BACKGROUND

School playgrounds are still too often sterile and rule bound environments that constrain rather than encourage children's play. However, over the last few years, North Lanarkshire Council (NLC) has been involved in projects that are changing not just the grounds themselves, but also the culture and attitudes that can conspire with the barren physical environment to limit the huge potential that a school's outside environment can offer.

This work has been made possible by the major investment that the Scottish Government has made (and is continuing to make) in children's play and specifically in school playgrounds. From 2009 -11 the Government, through the charity Inspiring

Scotland, invested £4m in the Go Play programme to support the development of the play sector in Scotland, focussing on 'free play' opportunities for 5 - 13 year olds. A range of voluntary sector organisations was involved in delivering the programme including Grounds for Learning, a charity that promotes the use of school grounds to support outdoor learning and play.

Eight primary schools, five in Glasgow and three in North Lanarkshire were involved in Grounds for Learning's project creating environments that encourage natural play. The aim of the Natural Play Project was not only to bring about physical changes to the grounds, but also to support the schools and local authorities to work through the policy, management and maintenance aspects of encouraging this kind of play.

During 2011/12, NLC commissioned PLAYLINK to provide additional and more intensive play training to support its three schools, with a particular focus on the introduction of 'loose materials'. It is this work that is the subject of this report.

The Natural Play Project was regarded as one of the outstanding successes of the Go Play programme and as a result, over 2012 - 2015, the Scottish Government is investing a further £1.3m in 32 more primary schools throughout Scotland. This, the Scottish Government Play Project, directed by Grounds for Learning, is now underway and is incorporating the principles and lessons of North Lanarkshire Council's loose materials work in many of the schools the project will be working with.

*You need to make a mess.  
It's actually getting stuck into stuff -  
because when you actually get stuck into stuff  
is when you learn.*

**Andrea Sella,**  
*Senior Media Fellow,  
Engineering and Physical Sciences  
Research Council*  
and Professor of Materials and  
Inorganic Chemistry, University College London

*This place is like a building site!*



## What are 'loose materials'?



'Loose materials' are materials that are open to manipulation. Some examples are water, sand, grit, mud, clay, stones, rods, canes, twigs, branches, wood sections, leaves, cones, berries, seeds, flower heads and fabric as well as materials like planks, palettes, cardboard, rope, fabric, pipes, guttering and small figures of people, animals and vehicles. Being non-prescriptive about the materials themselves is part of the game!

Some materials will be produced on the site itself, for example by what is planted there. Some can be installed on

site, for example by designing in a permanent sand play area or an outdoor water supply. Some can be brought onto the site from elsewhere, as required and for varying amounts of time; in which case some kind of on-site storage is likely to be necessary. Permanent features of the site may be designed to facilitate the use of loose materials - for example structures that form a base or framework for building platforms, shelters and dens; hollows and channels that will collect water; shallow ditches that suggest bridge building; nooks and crannies that invite intimate, small scale play.

Playground games such as skipping ropes, bats, balls and so on are quite a common feature of playgrounds and there are also innovative and interesting projects such as Dundee's 'Play in a Pod' and Bristol Children's Scrapstore's 'Play Pods' that supply schools with large containers filled with recycled scrap materials for break time play. However, the NLC projects are intrinsically different in that the concept of loose materials employed is much broader and there is a strong emphasis on natural materials. The playground itself is designed and planted to support and inspire this kind of play, meaning that elemental materials such as mud, water and sand can be freely available and that the place itself - the playground - becomes a landscape for play that changes and develops over time.



*A report on the introduction of loose materials to three primary schools in North Lanarkshire*

# North Lanarkshire Council's loose materials project

**'How loose materials can put the play back into school playgrounds: Adding value to Grounds for Learning's 'Natural Play Project'**

At the root of what is termed 'natural play' is children's own reflective, creative and experimental engagement with the natural world in a way which is non-prescriptive and is under their own control i.e. not directed by adults. In the course of the Natural Play Project, it became obvious that while some physical re-design of the playground is vital, a crucial source of the continuing engagement and interest of children lay in how far both the changed physical environment and the attitude and actions of the staff facilitate the availability of diverse and changing loose materials.

Many of the Natural Play Project schools expressed a strong interest in an approach that would maximise the use of loose materials. They wanted to build in relevant design features and commit funding to initial 'loose material' resources. However, additional funding was needed to support and train school staff to get the best possible outcome for the children, and the school as a whole, from such an approach, and importantly in being able to sustain it in a fresh and meaningful way. NLC generously provided this extra funding.

The additional support and training was discussed with and tailored to the individual schools and took place during 2011/12 alongside the Natural Play Project. It included considering the role of all the adults in facilitating play with loose materials in a school playground setting (the core of this was practical hands-on sessions); identifying and sourcing loose materials; and storing, looking after and replenishing loose materials.

## ORIGINS OF THE APPROACH

Children themselves, of course, have always understood loose materials as the raw materials of play. In the adult world they have been conceptualised both from 'play' and 'educational' perspectives.

From a play perspective, architects and landscape architects have played an important role, with a consequent emphasis on design and construction. Carl Theodor Sorensen, a Dutch landscape architect who observed children playing on post 2nd World War bomb sites and construction sites developed the concept of 'junk playgrounds' where children could use leftover construction materials to build their own playgrounds. Lady Allen of Hurtwood, the landscape architect Marjorie Allen, expanded Sorensen's ideas, introducing adventure playgrounds to the United Kingdom and instigating an International Adventure Playground movement. While many of the playgrounds fell victim to more stringent health and safety requirements and childcare regulation, they have enjoyed a certain revival in England and Wales as a result of the Westminster Government's Play Plan of 2008. The concepts of 'playwork' and 'playworkers', intrinsic to current thinking about the role of adults in supporting children's self-directed play, are a legacy of the adventure playgrounds.

An architect, Simon Nicholson (son of artist Ben Nicholson) gave us the term 'loose parts', often used interchangeably with the term 'loose materials'. Nicholson was interested in the process of the design of buildings and spaces, the concept of dynamic



*This place is like a building site!*



*A report on the introduction of loose materials to three primary schools in North Lanarkshire*



changing spaces and how given the right materials children could continuously re-shape and re-design space. He was concerned with indoor rather than outdoor space, but the principles of child-directed activity and freely available non-prescriptive materials are the same.

From a school's perspective, Wendy Titman's 1994 classic, and at the time innovative, *'Special Places Special People- the hidden curriculum of school grounds'*, looked at the subliminal messages and meanings conveyed by school grounds and their effect on children's perceptions and behaviour during break times. Titman's starting point was a concept of children's self-directed play as valuable and important. She identified the potential of the outside physical environment and of school staff attitudes to foster it.

The school playgrounds of Berlin have had an important direct influence on current work in Scotland through the work of GrünmachtSchule who are generous in sharing their experience and knowledge. This organisation was established in Berlin in 1984 as a result of concern from educators and landscape designers that school grounds were a wasted resource. It helps teachers,

students and parents to transform dull and uninspiring school grounds into beautiful and creative spaces for play and learning, a process that has occurred in around 100 of Berlin's 450 primary schools and 40 of their 250 secondary schools. It is difficult to overestimate the impact of seeing streams, water pumps and sand mountains in school playgrounds for the first time.

Historically, from an educational perspective there are many examples of experiential and child centred approaches to learning that draw on the outside environment and the natural world especially in the early years field. An early example was the approach developed by Susan Isaacs, psychoanalyst and head of the Malting House School in Cambridge in the 1930s, documented in *'The Intellectual Growth of Young Children'* and *'The Social Development of Young Children'*. The Malting House School and its grounds became akin to a building site: A laboratory where the questions posed by the children were followed through by children and adults as co-researchers. Some of the descriptions strike a chord with what we have witnessed in the playgrounds of the North Lanarkshire schools today.

## CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE

The life of the playground and of the classroom is often very separate, with the playground marginalised and given much less importance. The success of the Natural Play projects requires a sharing of responsibility for, and interest in, children's play during break times among all staff: Something that has the potential to inspire what happens in class time too. Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence provides a sound foundation for such integration with its recognition of life beyond the classroom, its emphasis on interdisciplinary learning and curriculum areas (rather than subjects) and the acknowledgement that children learn through all of their experiences.

The general format of the training programmes was the same for the three schools. The whole school staff took part in initial presentations and discussions about self-directed, non-prescriptive play, about the nature of loose materials and their potential in the school playground and about the role of adults in such a setting. At all the schools the whole school staff participated together in at least one of these initial sessions. On other occasions we met with different staff groups at different times.

Following these initial sessions further practical hands on sessions were planned with the school, introducing a range of different loose materials. Planning for these was collaborative, taking into account feedback and observations both from the previous session and generally from the playground. For much of this period construction work was still underway in the grounds and this was another factor that had to be taken into consideration in the timing of the training.

Each of the practical sessions included break times and class times, as well as school club groups at one of the schools. On one occasion an after school session included families. It was these sessions that brought life to the topics we discussed in the initial sessions and generated real enthusiasm and commitment. The training programmes devised for each of the schools are included in *appendix 3*.

# The training programme



*This place is like a building site!*



## The three schools

The three North Lanarkshire Council primary schools involved in this project were Banton, Knowetop and Thornlie. All are non-denominational and co-educational.

**Banton Primary School** is a 1960s rural village school near Kilsyth with a roll of 56 children. Its grounds include tarmac, grass and mature trees, and were already attractive and well cared for. The physical redesign carried out as part of the original Natural Play Project included a large sand area and willow den planting.

**Knowetop Primary School** is a fine Victorian school in Motherwell with a roll of 540 children, including children supported by the Visual Impairment Unit based in the school. Its roll was the largest of the three; and its grounds, almost entirely tarmac, the smallest of the three schools. The physical redesign carried out as part of the original Natural Play Project included a large sand area and boulders incorporating some existing trees and planting, the creation of a group gathering space, additional tree planting and the creation of various strong visual markers.

**Thornlie Primary School** was built in the 1950s and has a roll of 122. Situated in the heart of the Pather estate in Wishaw, it has extensive grass and tarmac grounds with areas of shrub planting. A lot of attention has been paid to the grounds in recent years and the school has a generally attractive and inviting appearance. This school had the biggest Natural Play Project budget and its physical redesign included a large sand area, the refurbishment of a performance space, the creation of a fire-pit and substantial willow and tree planting.

# Hands on with Loose Materials at Knowetop Primary School

## BACKGROUND

During the summer holidays, many physical changes to the playground had occurred. These included the construction of the sand area and surrounding big boulders and the construction of a 'gathering' area with huge log sections. Flaggpole points had been constructed and log sections were introduced to help create a visually obvious route through the grounds and to create visual and flexible physical boundaries, in a formerly rather sterile and undifferentiated space. This was particularly important in this school, which included many children with visual impairments.

Earlier observation of how the children were using the playground told us that the playground had a sociable and friendly ethos, with boys and girls playing together and an absence of fighting and overt conflict, especially for such a crowded space. However, there was a limited range of play and play opportunities, and children were easily distracted, suggesting that their engagement in their play was quite superficial. The predominance of 'tig' games ('normal tig,' 'hidey tig,' 'touchies',

'hunts') swooping backwards and forwards across the expanses of tarmac, with swift and unpredictable changes of direction, particularly disadvantaged the children with visual impairments.

In this school two training sessions had already taken place, both of which had included the entire school staff of 60 (in groups). The first of these covered children's play, the value of loose materials and the role of adults. The new design for the playground and the principles underlying it were presented and discussed.

The second session, to which half an in-service day was allocated, included an introduction to the physical changes to the grounds and to a range of loose materials. Staff experimented with the materials themselves, including making dens. Because there was a particular concern about risk at this school, the principles of a risk benefit approach to risk assessment were discussed at this session. Practical risk benefit assessment exercises were undertaken in the playground, for the sand area, the gathering place and the den making materials. The content, structure and organisation of the

practical session that was to take place with the children in two weeks time was discussed and agreed upon.

## PRACTICAL LOOSE MATERIALS PLAY SESSION WITH CHILDREN

This session was structured to include three loose materials play sessions. Class teachers were asked to volunteer themselves and their children for the two class sessions – before and after the morning break. These were followed by a lunch time session. All were conceived as open ended, self-directed play sessions with the loose materials.

## Observations

We have found that the initial introduction of materials in the smaller class sessions is less daunting and not as overwhelming than their introduction in break times. It makes it easier to identify and establish any necessary, minimal, ground rules and it helps establish the loose materials as a whole school interest and responsibility.

The materials were set out attractively before the first class group arrived and included rods, throws (an assortment

of sheets, blankets, curtains etc.) string, scissors, pegs, 'pennies' (round wood sections approximately 350mm diameter), chinks, and picnic blankets. Teachers and support staff came with their class groups (P1 and P5), both of which included children with visual impairments, and we quickly went over the adults' role as observers and scaffolders, giving them the 'Observing Children Guidelines' (see section on the Role of Adults) and post-it notes for jotting down observations. Each of the class sessions started with introductions of the participants and where they 'lived', the materials, and some basic ground rules; followed by playing, and ending with collective clearing up.

The lunch-time break session included all the materials that had been used by the class groups plus 'mini-world' figures (people, animals, transport etc.) and sand equipment such as buckets, spades, colanders, sieves, funnels, containers, and small trucks. The children who had already participated in the class sessions were good at communicating with the others, introducing them to the materials and initiating play.



## COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

- Staff were very positive about the practical elements of their own training session two weeks before. They felt it had given them a good practical handle on the materials, which meant they could support the children well when they needed it, especially the youngest children. Most importantly, they felt they had entered into the spirit of the children's play.
- During break time, most of the children were deeply engaged with what they were doing and reluctant to stop at the end of break. 'Tig' games did not take place. They had not been forbidden and we are certainly not suggesting that there is no

place for them, rather there were new play experiences on offer.

- Marginalisation of some children to the edges of the action did not occur. The range and choice of play that the materials offered meant that children could play meaningfully alone, in pairs, or in smaller or larger groups.
- No suggestion was made as to how any of the materials 'should' be used and no part of the school grounds or any of the features in them was out of bounds. This meant that the children exploited the materials and the environment to the full, exercising great imagination and inventiveness.



*This place is like a building site!*



*A report on the introduction of loose materials to three primary schools in North Lanarkshire*





There were nomadic dens, wall dens, steps and ramp area dens, and sand area dens. Other dens incorporated benches, picnic tables and a basketball post. The presence of particular features in the grounds and a range of materials meant that the concept of a den could expand beyond being a structure to being a space of one's own, and a place of expression and play. A den can be a nest. 'Pennies' can be a path into it. Especially in this largely tarmac setting, chalks can be gardens, places can be named and signify ownership. Throws used for dens also became robes. The children's imagination was evident in the way they used single spaces and materials in such a variety of ways.

### CLEARING UP

The children actively enjoyed helping to clear up, especially given some warning and good tools. For more comments on this subject, see the section on the Role of Adults.



*This place is like a building site!*



## Knowetop PS 15 August 2011

Summary of initial risk benefit assessments carried out by staff

### SAND AREA

#### Benefits

- Opportunities to play outside
- Encourages interaction, sharing and co-operative play
- Experiential learning ( e.g. don't throw sand or it'll get in your eyes).
- Sand a versatile material .Different textures of sand – dry, wet, firm etc.
- Different ways of building with and transporting sand
- Can be used and enjoyed by children at different stages (i.e. ages)
- Nice area to sit as well as be active

#### Risks

- Getting sand in eyes, mouth
- Animal faeces in sand
- Other foreign bodies appearing in sand overnight
- Sharp edges and skelfs on wooden edging
- Height of 'bridge' – danger of falling off/being oushed off

#### Relevant local factors

- Parents complaining about new uniforms and shoes (getting spoiled by sand).
- Parental anxiety
- Site accessible out of hours
- Vandalism

### OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

#### Benefits

- Nice outdoor environment
- Being in fresh air
- More relaxed atmosphere for the less able children – will inspire confidence
- Learning how to deal with wet, muddy,slippy area
- Experience of slopes for visually impaired children
- Range of sensory experience – the sound of the wind in the trees; texture of the logs; smell of earth/trees etc.

#### Risks

- Muddy, slippy
- Jumping from log to log – may fall.

#### Relevant local factors

- Risk of crowds gathering at night – could be tempting as a drinking corner
- Vandalism

### BUILDING DENS

( NB, staff had tried deb building themselves earlier)

#### Benefits

- All of the suggested possible benefits listed on the template were ticked, with the exception of 'pleasure' ! ( assume this was an oversight) These included:
- Development of self-confidence and well-being
  - Engagement with the natural environment and natural elements
  - Learning through experience: accidents from which one might learn
  - Mixing between different age ranges
  - Learning about natural materials, processes, and how they change with the weather
  - Manual skill development and sensory awareness
  - Construction skills and knowledge

In addition, the following benefits were listed:

- Creativity
- Problem solving
- Using imagination
- Co-operation
- Lateral thinking
- Improving relationships

#### Risks

- Eye injuries
- Sticks too long for smaller children
- Relevant local factors ( assume this has been written in terms of the site as a whole, or in terms of the possibility of leaving den structures semi- permanently in the grounds)
- Foxes, cats
- Access by the general public
- Young children ( not sure what this means)
- Football traffic
- Vandalism
- Adjacent astro turf attracts a lot of young boys to the playground area



# Cardboard and Transportation at Banton Primary School

## BACKGROUND

The grounds of this small rural school were already obviously well cared for with many attractive features such as the flowerbeds, vegetable plots and well-tended planters. There was ample space for the 56 children, including a mixture of grass and tarmac surfaces, changes of level and a number of mature trees. The school had recently stopped segregating the children by age in the playground and everyone was allowed to roam freely.

We observed that while the playground had a friendly and sociable ethos, children's play seemed fleeting and distracted, with children constantly darting from one area, or feature of the playground, to another. Football dominated the whole space with small groups of children (all boys) kicking balls all over the site. No nooks or crannies were safe from footballs and there were few places to sit comfortably and undisturbed for any length of time.



## COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

- Scale and abundance was essential to the success of this session. The time and effort put into ensuring the quantity and variety of this (free) material was well worth it.
- The involvement of families in collecting cardboard and helping children with transport was essential to this project and gave it a particular flavour, including some farm children arriving on mini John Deere tractors.
- Making the whole of the playground available, with its various routes, changes of levels and surfaces, and its huge sand area enabled a great range and freedom of play.

## CARDBOARD AND TRANSPORTATION

This was the third and last of this school's practical loose materials sessions with children and staff. In the first of the practical sessions the children had used the pennies, rods, throws, picnic blankets, pebbles, stumps and mini-world materials. In the second (which coincided with an HMIE inspection) the focus was on sand, water and den building. This third session had been planned with the head teacher and the whole school had been involved in preparing for it.

The idea was to bring quantities of cardboard, as a temporary loose material, into the grounds and also to combine this with a multitude of forms of transport. In the days leading up to the session, the school organised large supplies of cardboard. Both staff and children were involved, with a call going out for all kinds of cardboard: cardboard sheets, cardboard boxes and cardboard tubes of all sizes, and corrugated cardboard. Children were asked to bring in something, on the day of the session, which could be pulled or pushed to transport materials around the playground.

The session was structured to start with a P1 – P3 class group followed by a lunch time session involving the whole school.

Children parked their transport in the hall with the cardboard when they arrived. The cardboard was laid out in the hall with some boxes. Some of the boxes had been left as flat packs and others had been assembled. Sufficient materials were kept back to make sure there was plenty for the break session. String of various types, scissors, masking tape and gaffer tape were available and kept by staff in tool aprons (you can see instructions for making these in *appendix 4*).

Transport was enjoyed for itself and for transporting each other as well as for transporting materials.

The children used the cardboard for a vast range of projects from hiding in and jumping out of to construction of shopping centres and trains. One boy, whose father was a lorry driver, worked for the whole lunch break on his cardboard cab. Another boy, with some help from others, constructed an elaborate robot. Cardboard and tarmac are both great mediums for writing on, which enhances



*This place is like a building site!*

the children's play. Children combined the transport and cardboard inventively. After starting to use a slope for racing their transport, which involved a few precipitous attempts, the children carried out their own risk assessment, deciding to construct a cardboard crash barrier and masking tape stopping line. The sand area, as ever, extended the play still further.

During the planning process it was agreed to leave the cardboard available in the playground for the rest of the week. However, by the end of the session it was raining quite heavily and leaving piles of cardboard to become a sodden mess was not feasible. Photographs were taken and children decided between themselves whether it would be possible for them to take their own constructions home, and in the case of collaborative work, which member of the team should take it home. A few creations were allowed to stay inside the school for a few more days use. Everyone then joined in the clearing up..

### CARDBOARD WANTED!!

We'll be using our playground to experiment building with cardboard. So we need cardboard OF ALL SHAPES AND SIZES.

Between now and Monday 29 August please can you help us by bringing in any cardboard that you have, or can get.

This can include: cardboard tubes of all sizes (as well as lots of the insides of toilet rolls and kitchen rolls, some giant carpet tubes would be great!) boxes of all sizes, from shoe boxes and cereal boxes to the boxes that white goods and furniture come in (big boxes can be flat packed), sheets of cardboard and corrugated cardboard.

*A report on the introduction of loose materials to three primary schools in North Lanarkshire*



**HOMEMADE TRANSPORT NEEDED!!**  
We would also like every child to bring in something that can be pulled or pushed to transport materials around the playground. You will be using your transport to move materials like the cookies, pebbles and cardboard around the playground and to clear things up at the end. This could be something you have, like a shopping trolley, a wheelbarrow, a doll's pram, a bike with a trailer, an old buggy. Or something you construct for example using a skateboard or a pram base. **BE INVENTIVE!**  
Please bring your Banton buggies when you come to school on Monday 29 August. You could pile your cardboard on it!





# Thornlie Fire Pit

## WHY HAVE FIRE?

Children are fascinated by fire in a way that for some can almost be described as a drive. The degree of fascination and curiosity that fire engenders is reason enough to want to introduce it into school.

The concept of four elements – fire, air, earth, water – as the fundamental building blocks of the natural world is one that recurs in classical thought and continues to have resonance in the way in which we get to know about and engage with the material world. It is an obvious, though often omitted component of what we are terming 'natural play.'

Fire can give rise to a huge range of activities with enormous learning potential. The simple acts of building, lighting, sustaining and extinguishing a fire will be novel for most children. Testing out the properties of different materials when they burn; cooking on the fire – not just marshmallows, but a whole meal; music and story telling round the fire; lighting fires using friction; collecting, selecting and cutting firewood; making and then using charcoal. These are real possibilities, even within the school environment.

Fire can make events and celebrations special, including dark winter ones; and taking fire activities beyond a bonfire, children can make their own fire sculptures, design their own firework display, make and decorate their own candles. There are endless possibilities.

The obvious potential danger of fire, combined with its real fascination, mean that it can provide both the opportunity and the motivation for children to genuinely encounter and manage risk for themselves.

## FIRE AT THORNLIE

Thornlie PS opted to include a fire pit in the physical work to its grounds. This had been designed to be an attractive gathering space with or without an actual fire.

Once the fire pit had been built, all the teaching staff and the school janitor participated in training sessions, which included considering the question 'why have fire?' and, discussing draft 'fire pit guidance', designed for the school to build on and develop as they started to use the fire pit. The school itself organised further training sessions around fire (and also for den-making and the use of tools) at which, importantly, staff worked alongside children.

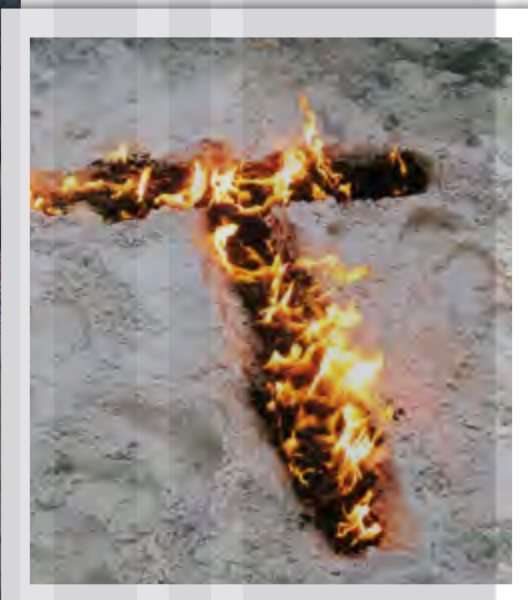
A practical session followed: building, lighting, extinguishing and clearing up a fire and making a fire sculpture. This was followed by discussion on the use of the fire pit with children, how best to safely store and maintain fire making materials (base wood, tinder, kindling and fuel) and how best to introduce fire to the children. It was decided to start by establishing a Fire Club as one of the school's Wednesday afternoon clubs.

This has proved to be a good approach, with small groups of children at a time becoming confident and responsible with fire. The school janitor has been important to the success of this project, taking on responsibility for the fire making materials and imparting his own skills and confidence to the children. The children have gathered fuel and kindling for the fire in the nearby woodland and have learned how to light fires without matches.



*'When, as a Head Teacher, you catch the aroma of barbecued sausages cooking in your own playground, then you know you've made a difference!'*

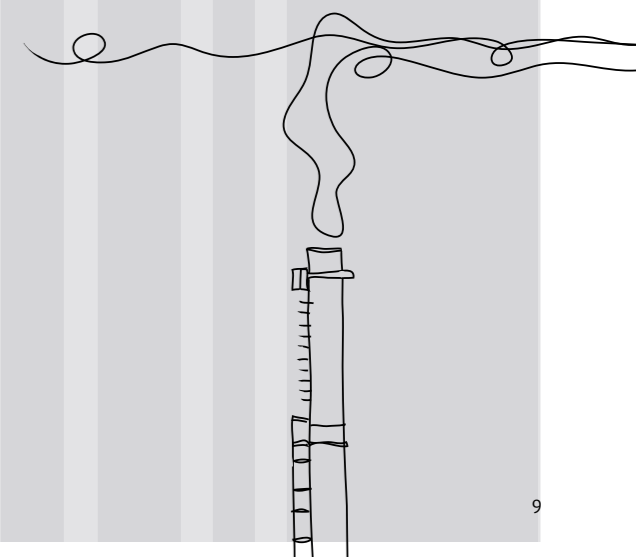
David Hughes,  
Head Teacher  
Thornlie Primary School



*This place is like a building site!*



*A report on the introduction of loose materials to three primary schools in North Lanarkshire*



# Co-operation, Collaboration and Mess at Thornlie

The loose materials we have observed encourage (and some require) collaboration. It seemed to us that the quality of the collaboration was very different from the collaboration, for example, of a team game. We observed that:

- Projects often started off as an individual or a paired project that other children were then attracted to, or were invited to join in order to further the project
- Depending on the materials and the nature of the project, there was often the option for a project to remain as an individual one
- Children joined and left projects depending on what stages they were at – so there were always different sized groups operating, and natural options for joining and leaving
- While collaboration was often required to manage materials and develop ideas, competition was not intrinsic. Rather, there was interest in what other groups were doing and borrowing of each other's ideas and techniques
- While it is important to have sufficient materials, unlimited supplies are not necessary or desirable. Negotiating the sharing of available materials is a realistic and important part of the general process and something that the children at this school manage well.

**The absence of any pre-decided or imposed end product or outcome is fundamental to the lack of competitive tension and the authenticity and power of self-discovery. Also fundamental is that adults resist 'stealing children's empowerment' (Susan Humphries' phrase) in a well meant desire to pre-empt or share knowledge. This isn't to say ofcourse that children themselves won't have an end product or outcome in mind, or won't devise one in the process of their play.**

In his Natural Play Project application, David Hughes, head of Thornlie said:

*"We would like (the children) to build and to explore and to climb and to jump.*

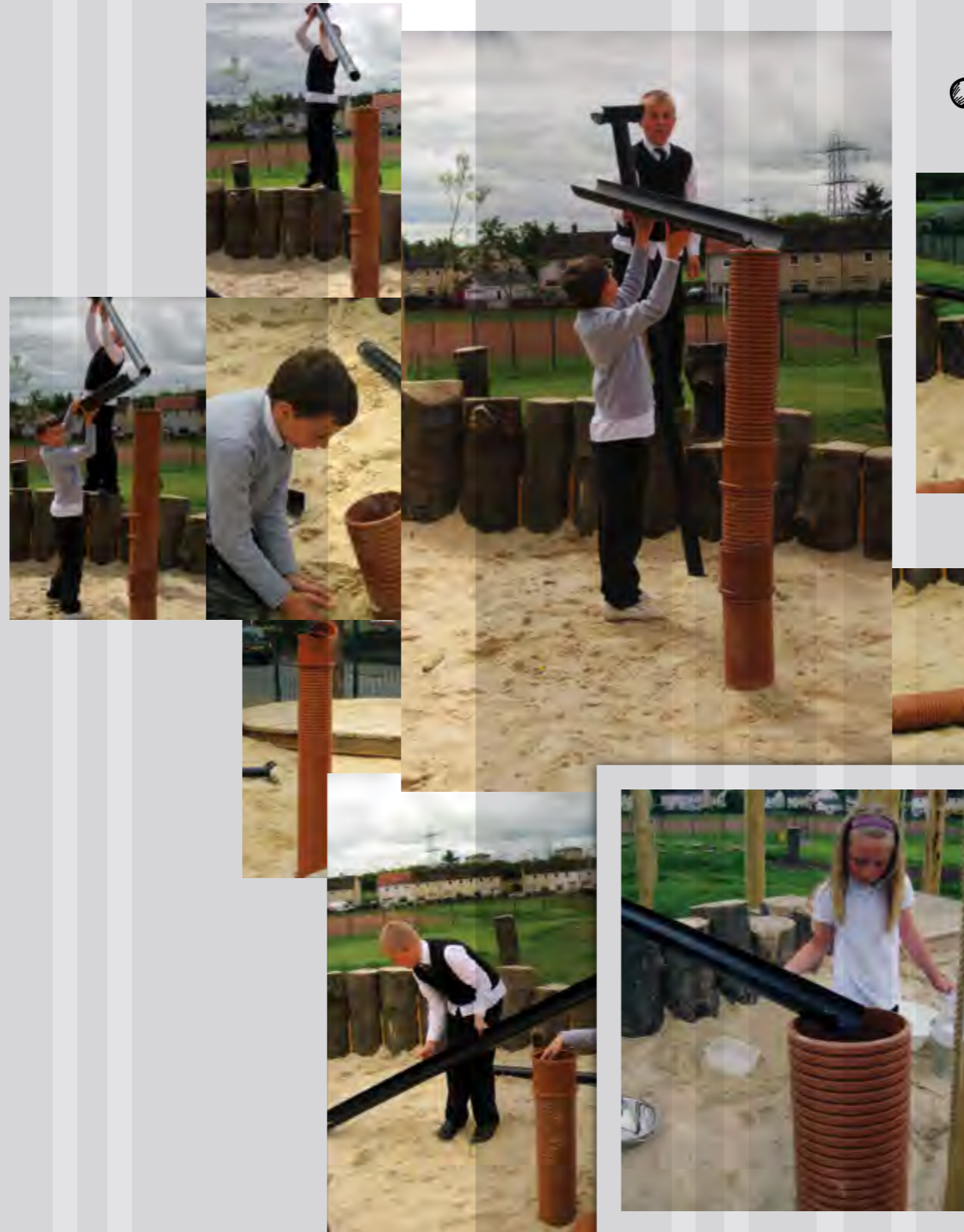
*We would like them to be immersed and in contact with natural materials—wood, water, grass, plants, mud.*

*If possible, we would like them to make decisions, to take risks, to work together, and to test themselves."*

In our initial observations of the playground, we noted lots of social interaction and vigorous physical play across age and gender. But in line with the aspirations expressed in the school's Natural Play Project application we observed that:

*"There is virtually no opportunity for any kind of engaged construction/making/manipulating materials type of activity in the grounds, as they are now, either in terms of the materials naturally available or materials supplied...Despite the amount of physical play that occurs, there's a lack of opportunity for really challenging, risk taking play involving exercise of judgement and building of skills."*

**Sue Gutteridge, Thornlie Playground Observation Report, 2010**



Here we describe some ways in which the loose materials invited the children to take such opportunities.

## AERIAL ARTWORKS

The first children (two boys) to arrive in the playground at lunch break made straight for the sand area and said, "let's carry on with our sand castle like yesterday". This involved using big sections of piping to make big constructions in and with the sand. They incorporated the guttering into the process and structures. As other children arrived, they joined in and extended the play. Much of this play concerned building the pipe sections up high and then devising various methods of getting sand into them. The children themselves referred to aspects of the construction as an 'aerial artwork'. This play continued throughout the lunch break and required continuous collaboration.

*This place is like a building site!*

*A report on the introduction of loose materials to three primary schools in North Lanarkshire*

## STRAW BALE CONSTRUCTIONS

Each of the schools had straw bales as part of their loose materials assignment. Once they are 'out' it is not practical (or even possible) to get them 'in' again, meaning that as a loose material they have a shorter and less predictable life than many other materials. However, the quality of the experience that children have and the unusual challenges they pose in terms of weight and scale make them well worth trying.

The first straw bales session at Thornlie was planned for the last week of the summer term and it was agreed that they

would be left out to be played with and to gradually disintegrate until the end of term. The location of this play was chosen to minimise the spread of the materials and the participants were the nine children (eight boys, one girl) who were members of the Outdoor Club, one of the school's Wednesday clubs. Planks, palettes, picnic rugs, throws and pennies were also available. On the back of both the challenges and successes of the first session, a second session took place the following school year when straw bales were provided along with many other materials during both class and break time.

The first session was set up, before the

children arrived, by moving most of the straw bales from their storage place onto the younger children's grass area, while leaving a few bales for the children to transport themselves. On seeing the bales, the girl in the group immediately knew what she wanted to do with them – build a house – and set about doing this, enlisting the necessary help from the adults available. The boys operated as a group, trying out the bales and their properties in various ways, including climbing on them, jumping on and from them, and attempting to build with them. It took them some time to agree on a collective project, and eventually they borrowed ideas and techniques from the



girl, to build successfully. Although the boys had the idea of using the planks as a roof.

The bales presented more challenges than some of the other materials, requiring the children to experience and understand their particular properties of weight, texture and bulk, and to devise ways of moving and manipulating them. The materials also required them to think and plan ahead in order to achieve an end result. While the individual girl and the group of boys did this in different ways, they all seemed to gain great satisfaction from what they managed to do.

As ever, it was the possibility of combining materials that led to increased

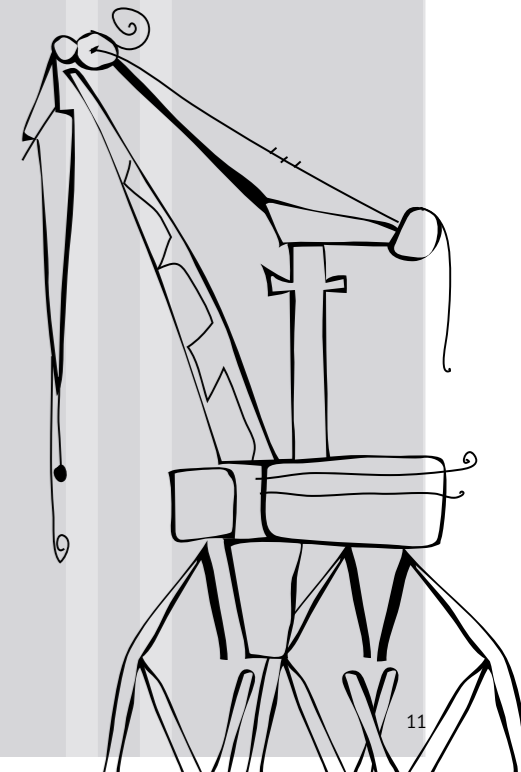
creativity and invention. The picnic rugs, throws, planks and (inevitable) pennies all came into play.

Building on the experience of the first session, at the second straw bale session additional methods such as wheelbarrows and trolleys were available to offer different and interesting ways of transporting the bales. The children quickly devised collaborative methods of moving and stacking the bales, building challengingly high towers, immersing themselves in the material and using it for both the most energetic and thrilling play, and for rest and reflection.



*This place is like a building site!*

*A report on the introduction of loose materials to three primary schools in North Lanarkshire*





### SAND AND WATER ENGINEERS

This was the first time the children had access to water in the playground and it was introduced to a combined class and Wednesday club. The children had an hour in which to play, and over the course of this time a collective engineering project developed which drew in more and more children as it progressed. A hose, gutters, pipes and a whole range of containers were available.

Additional materials brought in included: large containers (buckets and basins); narrow tubing (for siphoning); funnels; sieves; colanders and shells. These were set out before the lunch break along with the existing equipment. The hose was attached to the tap and the large containers were positioned in the

middle of the sand area and filled with water.

The water play had some tension attached to it, mainly because of the dominance of the hose and the genuine problems that would result if children got soaked. Activity initially centred around filling and pouring, with the properties of different types, shapes and sizes of containers being explored. Later in the session, children constructed a watercourse with four pieces of guttering, and also experimented with levels and gradients.

Although the hose is fun (and an essential piece of equipment) it can detract from many other possibilities, it can only be under the control of one child at a time, and tempts water fights, soakings etc.



*This place is like a building site!*

## A Page of Pennies

There are lots of great loose materials. Some of them are particularly valuable both by themselves and in combination with other things. We have been struck by the multiple uses to which simple circular wood sections can be put. They get multiple affectionate names too, being known variously as 'pennies', 'cupcakes' and 'cookies'.



*A report on the introduction of loose materials to three primary schools in North Lanarkshire*

# Chalk Versus Playground Markings

Paint markings are often seen as a cheap and cheerful way of improving playgrounds. But why bother with them when a plentiful supply of fat chawks and the blank canvas of a stretch of tarmac lets children devise the games they want to play at the time, and in the places they want to play them. Chalk can demarcate special places (see the 'club zero' images), can extend dens with colourful chalk gardens, can decorate the ubiquitous pennies, and can provide instant settings and boundaries for small figures. Mixed with water, different effects can be achieved, and wet chalk can even be used for face and body painting. Sometimes people complain about the 'mess' of chalk, but it only takes a good downpour, or a hose, to wash it all away. Contrast all this with the sterility of playground paint markings and their depressing appearance as they inevitably start to flake and fade.



*This place is like a building site!*

# The role of adults

## WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH: WHOLE SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITY AND INVOLVEMENT

Often the practical responsibility for break times is seen as entirely the role of support and janitorial staff. What goes on in the playground (with support and janitorial staff) is divided from what goes on inside the building (with teachers) and is seen as less important. The NLC job descriptions of the janitors, and classroom and supervisory assistants, who have the major responsibility

for the physical playground (in the case of janitors) and children during break times (in the case of classroom and supervisory assistants), have virtually nothing to say about the playground or about play. Perhaps this is something that could change?

Change of the kind envisaged here certainly requires some conscious integration of approaches, attitudes and organisation; including, crucially, a sharing of responsibility and interest in children's play during break times among all staff.

## KEEPING CHAOS AT BAY

Adults' best memories of their own childhood play rarely consciously include adults. In fact, it is the seeming absence

of adults that contributes to the quality of the remembered experiences: the mess, the danger, the real sense of discovery and control. In fact, for most children then, as now, there are adults in the background thinking about them, and this transmits to children a sense of limits and boundaries without which fear and chaos can overwhelm positive feelings of discovery and control.

School staff can fulfil a similarly subtle role with regard to children in the playground. This implies a 'standing back' role for staff; but not doing things, or being seen to do things, can be really difficult. It can feel as if there is no role for the adult, although this is far from the case.



## OBSERVING CHILDREN PLAYING - SOME SUGGESTIONS

- Make any observations that seem interesting to you – some things to look out for could include:
- Are there some materials that seem to have instant appeal?
  - In what situations and with which materials do you see children concentrating most and being most engaged?
  - What different kinds of play have you seen during the session?
  - Can you see children playing alone, in pairs or small/large groups?
  - Do boys and girls approach and use the materials in the same way or differently from one another



*A report on the introduction of loose materials to three primary schools in North Lanarkshire*

## ADULTS' ROLES AS OBSERVERS, FACILITATORS AND SCAFFOLDERS

*Observing* is probably the most important thing that adults can do. It is a process that can go on all the time, not in a self-conscious or rigid way, but as reflective watching. Think about how the children are playing and relating, and the opportunities that the setting and the loose materials offer and how these can be extended and adapted. It can aid your memory to take photographs and, of course, these are useful for documentation and discussion too; but beware of letting the camera come between you and the child. Different people develop different methods of recording their observations. Small notebooks or post-it pads that you can keep in a pocket are useful for jotting things down at the time, or immediately after a break. It can be helpful to have a few key points in mind.

## FACILITATING AND MANAGING.

Look at environments from the children's point of view – seeing mess as positive but keeping space and materials inviting. Decisions about the introduction, availability and presentation of materials should be based on your observations, and will be made both before and during play sessions.

Clearing up is a collective responsibility and children will easily get into the habit of helping; but this will not be sufficient in itself, and adults have an additional role to play in the bigger sorting, clearing out and cleaning operations that need to occur regularly if the playground is not to descend into uninviting chaos. An additional bell or other warning before the bell signifying the end of a break time can be useful in heralding clearing up time.

However, this should not preclude letting projects continue over a period of time. At Banton, a den tree with its ever expanding internal and external elaborations continued over several weeks until it was observed to have run its course. At Thornlie, straw bales used originally for building were allowed to disintegrate whereupon they became an 'island' for almost a whole term.

## SCAFFOLDING

Generally try to resist the temptation to direct or make suggestions for children's play – even if it seems to take the children a while to get going. If conflict or difficulties arise, expect that the children will sort it out themselves, offer encouragement and give them time to do so.

This does not mean to say that adults should not engage with children in their play, rather that it should be done at the child's implicit or explicit invitation, and on equal terms.

If certain materials appear to be 'causing' conflict, try not to react by banning the materials but think about what other approaches might work. This is not to say that intervention is never necessary. Children may need help with things they cannot physically or technically manage – but wait till you are sure they want and need your help.

Suggestions can be made in a subtle way. For example, at one school, children were having difficulty propping up guttering on logs to get a reliable gradient. An adult placed crates nearby to allow the children to discover for themselves that these crates were better than logs for this purpose.

## PEOPLE WITH PARTICULAR SKILLS

Schools will not necessarily have staff with all the skills needed for this kind of work. Though it is good to think in terms of improving support and training for existing staff and also of the possibility of changing job descriptions, person specifications and recruitment practices; it is also beneficial to be able to involve adults with specialist, skills both on a voluntary and a paid basis. At Thornlie, a skilled woodworker/forester has been involved in working with both children and staff. These images show how the skills are transferred to break times.



*This place is like a building site!*

## HANDYPERSONS

Schools may include staff with the kind of general 'handyperson' skills that are essential to the ongoing maintenance and development of these projects. More often they do not, or such tasks are deemed to be outside the remit of existing staff. Centralised methods of getting such jobs done are bureaucratic, unresponsive and expensive. Banton has experimented successfully with employing such a person on a job-by-job basis, and we believe that this approach could be extended to other schools.



*A report on the introduction of loose materials to three primary schools in North Lanarkshire*

## TEACHERS

Break times are breaks for teachers too, and it is rare to see teachers in the playground during these times. However, at Thornlie, by using continuing professional development time flexibly, time has been made for teachers to do just that, and the head teacher is a frequent presence in the playground too. The dividends have been enormous. It is obvious that the children value the teachers' interest greatly and the teachers themselves claim inspiration from the children's play and from the playground generally. This point is explored more fully in the next section on the Curriculum for Excellence.

## PARENTS

Finally, it is essential that parents are kept well informed about new proposals and kept abreast as things develop. For many people, including of course some parents, 'education' and 'mess' seem antithetical, and explaining why and how a school proposes to go down a certain route, and conveying the excitement of it is vital. At Thornlie, the first P1 open morning this school year took place in the playground with parents, children and staff playing together. In this way, real understanding of and support for this approach can be established from the start in a natural and practical way.

There can be concerns about clothes and Banton dealt with these by inviting parents and other family members to witness and participate in a loose materials session, following this up by jointly deciding on an appropriate clothing policy.

Families, and the local community generally, can be important contributors to supplies of loose materials and can get involved in specific projects – as seen during the cardboard and transportation session at Banton.



When talking about the role of adults we started by saying, 'change of the kind envisaged here certainly requires some conscious integration of approaches, attitudes and organisation – including, crucially, a sharing of responsibility and interest in children's play during break times, among all staff.'

Schools commonly express recognition of the importance and value of play, but often assume that it has an ulterior purpose, for example to learn, or to be healthy. However, children do not play in order to learn or be healthy, although these may be welcome by-products of play. One of the exciting things about this project has

been seeing the power of children's play and the materials used in that play to inspire teachers and create a new dynamic between the playground and the classroom.

The current educational climate in Scotland, expressed particularly through the Curriculum for Excellence, provides an environment that enables this to happen. Nevertheless, there is still inevitably tension between the demands for monitoring, accountability and assessment generated, even by the flexible Curriculum for Excellence, and 'play', which is conceived as motivated for its own sake, under children's own control, and non-prescriptive.

# The Curriculum for Excellence and playgrounds like building sites



*This place is like a building site!*

The stated aim of the Scottish Government's Curriculum for Excellence, which has been being phased into Scottish nurseries, primary schools and secondary schools since 2009 is to transform education in Scotland by providing a flexible curriculum, encompassing all the experiences planned for children throughout their education. It is based on the recognition that learning takes place anywhere and at any time. A belief in the purpose of education as aiding full personal and social development is expressed through the government's concept of the 'four capacities' of becoming confident individuals, successful learners, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

The Curriculum for Excellence lays out detailed 'experiences and outcomes' for every curriculum area, both to describe expectations for learning and progression in terms of the 'four capacities' and to provide a key method of assessing them. 'Experiences and outcomes' seen as generally applicable to play have been listed (see *appendix 2*) and may conflict with a concept of play as genuinely non-prescriptive and under children's own control. Inevitably what happens spontaneously during break times will differ from teacher-initiated activities.

However, what is different and interesting about this project is the potential that the materials and the children's own playground activities have to inspire teachers, and the continuing dynamic between the playground and the classroom. To assess these situations teachers are developing subtle and non-interventionist methods of observing and recording experiences and outcomes rather than predetermining them. As described in the section on the role of adults, the introduction of flexible continuing professional development time for teachers can mean their regular presence in the playground. We describe two examples of the power of the children at play, the playground and its materials to animate the curriculum: Nests and Ephemeral Art Case Study.

*'Last year we decided that it would be good if teachers could go out into the playground (at break times) and jot down if they spotted any experiences or outcomes taking place... And they couldn't stop spotting them... Then teachers started taking their classes out more. They'll have spotted something at break time and this can give them ideas for their outdoor lessons; meanwhile, ideas from the class are also influencing what children do at breaks.'*

Head Teacher,  
**Thornlie**



## NESTS

In the spring term, the P1 teacher and the classroom assistant were working with their class of 21 children on the topic of birds. An aspect of this work involved nest building in the playground. After viewing film of how birds actually build nests, the teacher's original idea was to bring some pre-selected materials into the classroom for the children to use to build small nests; but at the suggestion of another teacher and after some discussion and planning with the children the day before, she instead took the children outside. The teacher gave a graphic description of the way the children used the materials, conveying their excitement, enjoyment and engagement. No special materials were brought in – these were materials routinely available in the playground at this time, materials that the children were already familiar with.

*...it really brought the drama alive for them because when they built their nests they were pretending that they were the chicks being born. They were flying around. They were collecting materials. They were squawking and splashing. So instead of doing everything in the classroom, building small models, it brought the whole thing alive, because they were pretending that they were the birds. A lot of talking and listening...A lot of problem solving too, because they had to decide, 'Is this stick too long?' 'Is it too short?' 'This isn't working – what will I use?' 'What can I use to make the nest soft?'*

*'The children told me what materials they wanted to use because they knew what materials were out in the playground...But they also changed their minds and decided to use materials they hadn't thought about before, once they were out there... They used the sticks, twigs, leaves, hay, stones, woodchip, sand, grass, mud – muck- lots of muck. Water obviously. They were using puddles to wet the muck. They were gathering big handfuls of muck and carrying it over. It was great! And they were jumping in the puddles. Grabbing big handfuls of grass and things. Anything they could get their hands on really...The good thing was it had been raining the day before so it was very, very muddy. The children knew that they could use the mud to bind the materials together – all of the hay, all of the sticks, all of the twigs, everything could be bound together with the muck...It really brought it alive for them. It was wonderful. It was so much fun. One of the girls actually said 'Can we do this every day!'*

The nests stayed in the playground to be enjoyed at break times over the next few days by other children too, and more nests of various kinds proliferated.

The experience had a profound effect on this teacher:

*'I would never even have thought to use all these building materials ...And I'm a lot more confident now to go out and make use of them. It's so much more exciting and it brings it all alive... To enjoy it with the children. You enjoy it because they're having so much fun and they're so engrossed in what they're doing. It just makes the lesson so much more enjoyable and meaningful for you as well.'*



*'The impact was the resources, and the fact that the resources changed impacted on children's play.'*

*P3 teacher*

## AND EPHEMERAL ART

This P3 teacher described how the idea of using the playground materials developed:

*'(Our art session in the playground) followed a discussion of the artist Andy Goldsworthy and how art could be created anywhere. The children looked at some of his images and discussed the types of materials he used to create his artworks. We talked about the temporary nature of his sculptures and thought about how we could create our own artworks in the playground with similar natural materials. I had previously collected cones, pebbles, small twigs and sticks as well as using the larger stones, large sticks and pennies that were already in the playground.'*

*We discussed the recording of these artworks and need for them (the children) to understand that they would be temporary art forms and structures, and the importance of photography to capture our artwork to enable us to reuse the materials again and again.*

*(The children) were encouraged to work collaboratively and share ideas and be spontaneous. I tried to emphasise the need to think about using the materials to create pattern and shapes as opposed to creating a known image e.g. using the stones to create a flower. I encouraged them to experiment and as soon as they created something they were happy with, we would photograph it and change or move materials to recreate something else. And I encouraged them to be playful with the materials and find their own creative path and solutions.'*

*P1 teacher*

*'The children have really shown me. The children have shown me how to do it. The more they use the materials, the more they know how to use them.'*



# Sand Areas

Good sand areas can promote a diverse range of play and learning opportunities including construction and engineering activities, social and co-operative enterprises, sculptural and tactile experiences and there are many such examples throughout this report.

Sand and particularly sand with water can deeply engage children in meaningful play over an extended period of time, which is important in a space like a school playground where children are playing so regularly.

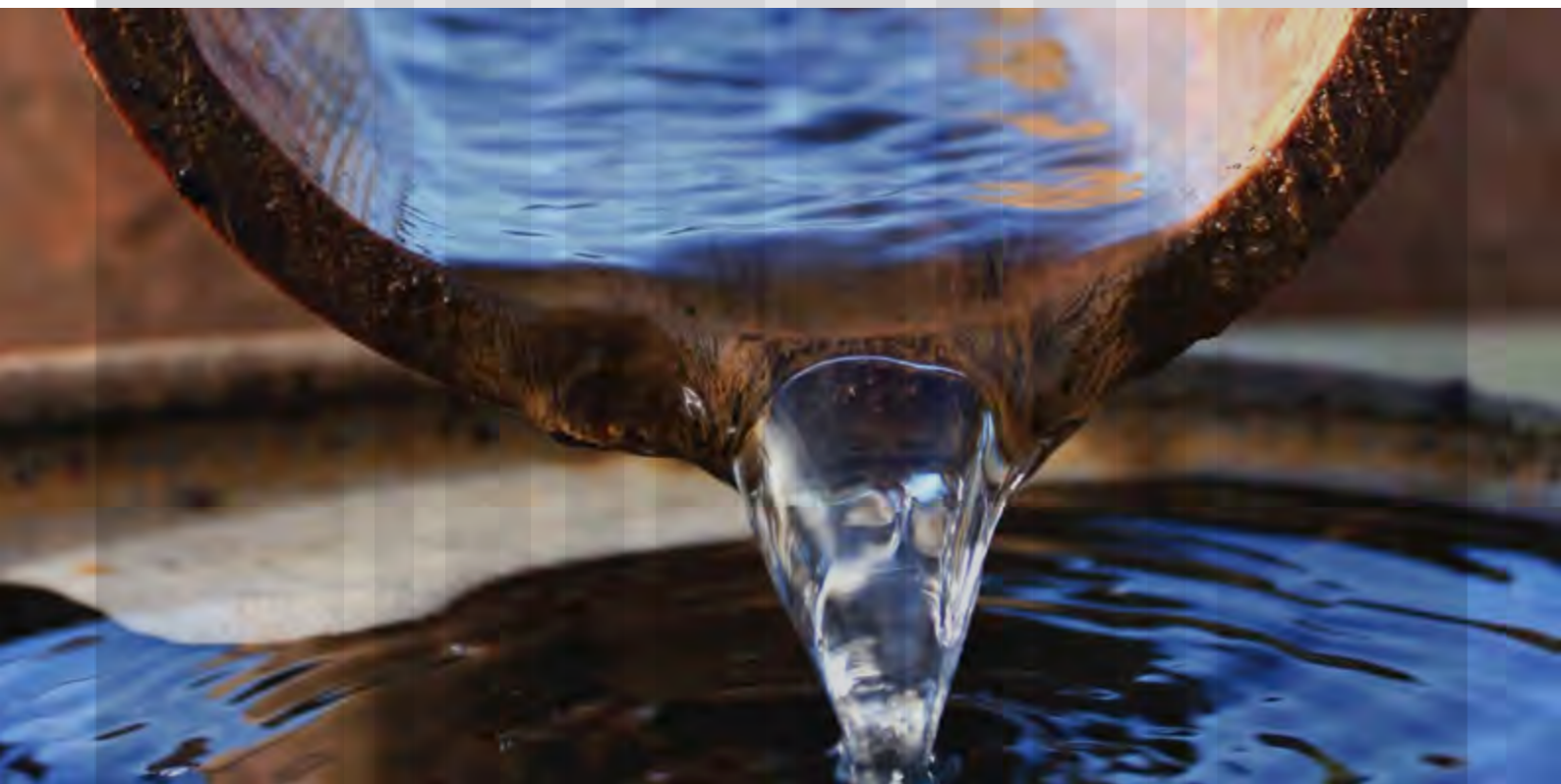
Sand and water are key components of the projects described in this report. However, we realise that they can give rise to a lot of trepidation, which we hope we can dispel.

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Sand areas offer unparalleled play opportunities if designed to approximate a beach rather than a sand box.

- They should be BIG
- The sand should be deep enough to really dig – 300mm with some areas at 450mm
- The shape should be irregular, accommodating different groups and kinds of activities at the same time
- They should include suitable edges and/or platforms for sitting on, building on and incorporating into landscapes
- They can include structures such as pulleys, which enhance and extend activity
- They can include planting for drainage and/or wind break purposes
- They should be assumed to be for ALL AGES. Older children love playing in sand as much as younger ones.

# Sand & Water



*This place is like a building site!*

## WHAT KIND OF SAND ?

There are a large number of sands available, each with different properties. Builders' sand is not suitable as it can contain irritants and it can also stain. Silica sands are useful (e.g. FS9 from Fife Silica Sands). There is a wide variety of sands which can be termed "play sand" or "white sand" with a rounded particle profile and a maximum grain size of 1.25mm and a high proportion of fines.



## MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

Sand provokes concerns about animal faeces, syringes and broken bottles. However, these concerns are often exaggerated and sand is being used successfully in an increasing number of public play areas, including those in urban inner city areas – places that are far more challenging than school playgrounds to maintain.

In a school it should be easy to arrange for a member of staff to visually check the sand area every morning before the children arrive. This is obviously particularly important in the case of school grounds that are open to, or used by, the public out of school hours. The sand should be raked regularly (e.g. daily or weekly) with frequency depending on the observed requirements of the site. This is the most important maintenance requirement, and one that should be easily accommodated as part of the general daily grounds check.

## Animal faeces

Cats (and foxes if they are present) can be attracted to sand areas as latrines and their faeces and urine can contain worms, parasites and bacteria. These need to be ingested in order to cause health problems (which include toxoplasmosis and E. coli). However, there are a number of approaches to managing this problem.

Monitoring is important, as the situation will change over time, as local cat and fox populations change. Cats are most likely to use a sand pit at night, so inspect in the mornings and adapt your inspection frequency to how often the problem occurs (e.g. daily, weekly or monthly). Rake the sand during inspection, as cats will often bury their faeces.

Discourage cats from visiting the site. There are many ways that this can be done. Riverside Primary School in Stirling found that fixing large metal cats to nearby railings and using marble 'cats eyes' in the sand pit wall has helped to deter cats. Other deterrents include plants that naturally deter cats, half filled bottles of water and using scents that cats dislike, or which mimic a stronger cat's territorial boundary.

Hand hygiene is important. Ensure that children wash their hands after sand play.

## Dangerous litter

Sand areas in unfenced and open access school grounds may occasionally be used as social spaces. The risk of syringe needles being discarded in sand is commonly cited and yet very rarely reported. In the UK there are no recorded instances of a member of the public contracting a blood-borne viral infection from either a discarded needle or syringe.

### Sand area covers, or not?

Covers are often suggested as a solution to perceived or actual problems, although the covers themselves can generate further problems. Once covers are on there can be a tendency not to take them off, or for routines to become established where they only come off in 'nice weather'. For large sand areas the best option is to use a tarpaulin or haulage net weighted down. However, tarpaulins are also liable to be stolen or damaged in areas where there is problematic use of the school grounds out of hours.

### Disinfecting sand

Where for any reason children may be putting sand in their mouths, it is worth thinking about regular disinfectant treatments. A weak solution of child-safe household disinfectant should be sprinkled on the sand using a watering can or similar, and sprayed in with a hosepipe (or substantial downfall of rain). Children should be kept out of the sand area for a day after disinfection.

### Topping up and replacement of sand

The sand will need to be topped up every one or two years and will need to be completely replaced every four or five years, though these frequencies depend on the nature of particular sites. A budget should be allocated for this.



*This place is like a building site!*

### CLEARING IT UP

Sand does travel, but this is a manageable problem.

### Sand blow

On windy sites, sand can blow out of the sand pit and across the rest of the playground. This does not present any particular health and safety issue, but is more an issue of losing sand, which will need to be replaced. If a site is generally windy, try and choose the least windy part of it for the sand area. Recessing the sand pit and providing a low boundary wall will help. Where the site allows it, planting quick growing shrubs (such as willow) around the sand pit can create a windbreak. Hosing down the sand in very dry periods will also minimise blow. Silt traps can be fitted in storm drains where the blocking of drains is likely to be a problem.

Regular sweeping up is something that children can enjoy doing given the right equipment. Good sturdy brooms cut down to suitable sizes for very young children are much better than most children's versions, which are often too flimsy for the job.



*A report on the introduction of loose materials to three primary schools in North Lanarkshire*

### Sand indoors

Sand can travel indoors – in shoes, pockets and sleeves, creating extra work for cleaning staff. The solution is for children to be shown a sand routine of shaking their clothes out before they leave the sand area. Provide a soft brush for dusting down shoes and a good doormat for wiping feet and get children into the habit of washing hands after sand sessions.

### THROWING SAND

Most schools establish not throwing sand as a basic, easily understood ground rule with an obvious penalty. In general, sand areas give rise to very few problems of behaviour – in fact, the reverse is true. If a child gets sand blown or thrown into their eyes, pour cool water over the eye to flush out the sand particles. Tears help to remove eye irritants, so do not discourage crying!

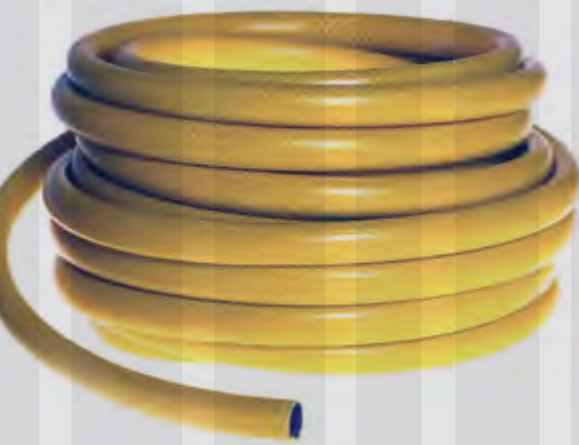
The main issue, especially in larger schools, is controlling the number of children who use the area. Usually this is resolved, where necessary, through some kind of rota system, though this should be reviewed regularly and kept flexible, in order that children can follow through ideas over a period of time and in order that mixed age groups can play together.



# Water

A water supply nearby will add exponentially to the play possibilities of sand, as well as being an important resource in its own right. Water is most easily supplied by installing an outside tap (if there is not one already) and hose. It is easy to ensure that taps can be turned off from inside the school and/or can be disabled when necessary.

It is also good to have large containers that can be easily filled with water using the hose. We have found that half barrels, obtainable from garden centres or distilleries, work well. Very charred barrels are best avoided. Several of these placed near each other and, if possible, at slightly different heights will accommodate a lot of children and will offer endless opportunities for siphoning, pouring, decanting, filling, exploring the floating properties of different materials, and so on. In winter they can be filled and left to freeze and children can indulge their fascination with ice. Such barrels will need to be decanted regularly so that the water does not become stagnant. Without water, they remain good play features.



Children's desire to play with water means that in the absence of other supplies they will find it in drains and puddles. Few schools are lucky enough to have a burn in their school grounds. Fintry Primary School in Stirlingshire does and two of these images show the children using it during both break and class times.

The current phase of the Scottish Government Play Project is looking at how water from outside taps can combine with harvested rainwater to be used for play and learning.



## CLOTHING

If a school is introducing sand and water (as well as other potentially messy materials such as mud) and encouraging children to go out there and get stuck in, this can conflict with strict uniform policies that emphasise the importance of a neat, pristine appearance.

Ordinary sensible, comfortable, easily washable clothes plus wellington boots, when necessary, should be fine for most outdoor activities, and if all children are encouraged to bring a change of clothes to school, this will deal with getting soaked or muddy. There are

some situations in which waterproof jackets and trousers might be desirable e.g. winter water play, or going out on very wet days.

Routine requirements to don waterproof trousers, jackets and boots in order to play with sand and/or water are unnecessary. These clothes are often not the most comfortable (especially the trousers). Putting them on and taking them off takes precious time out of already short lunch breaks and can deter children from these activities.

*This place is like a building site!*

*A report on the introduction of loose materials to three primary schools in North Lanarkshire*

## SAND AND WATER EQUIPMENT

Water and sand are too often associated solely with very young children. But both are equally fascinating for older children too. This message can be conveyed in the kinds of extra equipment provided – garden equipment such as proper spades, trowels and forks and authentic household equipment such as plastic containers (with and without lids), plastic bottles of varying sizes, trays, jelly moulds, cake tins, sieves, colanders, slotted spoons, plastic tubing, funnels, jugs, and containers of all sizes are all good instead of, or at least as well as, traditional beach toys. Lengths of guttering and sections of piping are great for channelling water over long distance. Trucks and diggers of various sizes will also add another dimension to sand and water, though the sheer pleasure and interest of mixing sand and water should not be underestimated.

More temporary materials like cardboard tubing, paper cups and paper fairy cake (and smaller) cases are good too, as are an assortment of natural materials like shells, pebbles, branches, flowers, leaves, etc.

Miniature animals, people, small vehicles and boats etc. alone or alongside these other resources will generate the creation of a plethora of scenes, events and narratives. We observed dramatic events with playmobil people caught in floods (coinciding with severe flooding in the UK).

Obviously such materials need some management (based on observation of use) in terms of renewing, refreshing, adding and subtracting. However, what, absolutely, is not necessary and will detract from the quality of the children's experience is for adults to choose materials on the basis of desired pre-decided outcomes.

## FREE DELIVERIES

North Lanarkshire Council Land Services are happy to deliver useful branches, clippings and bark to their primary schools. The children at Knowetop and Thornlie primary schools used these materials with great pleasure. We specified the lengths and requested evergreen branches, because we were working in winter, and these were put to great use for den decorating, fence weaving, nest making and ephemeral arts.

Woodlands provide some of the best play and learning environments. For this reason, the Natural Play project schools all now have significant tree and shrub planting. The species chosen offer a variety of play possibilities including:

- Production of loose materials such as cones, acorns and other seeds, berries, glossy evergreen leaves/branches or coloured stems
- Copses of shrubby trees or bushes such as hazel, laurel or rhododendron to form natural den spaces
- Densely planted willow coppice areas with small cuttings planted for the harvesting of long rods in 2/3 years – great for den building, living willow structures or basket work (hazel is also useful in this way)
- Native tree woodland areas to benefit wildlife and provide a natural woodland context for play.

# Living Woods/Tomorrow's Woods/Branching Out



*This place is like a building site!*



*A report on the introduction of loose materials to three primary schools in North Lanarkshire*

Schools have continued to plant a variety of big trees and tiny little ones (available free to schools each year from the Woodland Trust), building and growing resources they can harvest easily themselves, as well as richly extending their play/learning environments.

Banton makes full use of woodland areas near their school with regular exploration and foraging trips. This much-loved activity is allowing a sophisticated knowledge of woodland environments to develop, as well as the collection of fresh baskets of natural materials. Thornlie has also visited woods near to the school and replenished their stocks of firewood for their fire club, developing expertise in finding suitable material and much else besides.

With the growth of Forest Schools and the excitement around the Curriculum for Excellence and outdoor learning, there is

a growing network of people who can be very useful to schools. For example, forest school educator and furniture maker Alan Kain has supported and extended the understanding of woodland culture and skills for children and staff in many schools across the authority. This has been done through specialist den building sessions using additional tools and materials, green woodwork training for teachers, the creation of 'welly racks', woodland folklore sessions and the use of a wide variety of natural materials to support both outdoor learning and play. There are many other people local to your school who would be happy to bring their skills and knowledge of woodland management into the grounds; hedgelayers, tree surgeons, handymen/women who may also be able to bring regular supplies of stumps, pennies, rods etc.

# Storage and ongoing maintenance of materials

## KEEPING PLAY MATERIALS ACCESSIBLE

The crucial thing to get right is the ease with which children can access the materials. For this reason we suggest avoiding indoor storage, which can involve negotiating awkward shaped items through a number of heavy doors and corridors, as well as the reduction of play time. Even outdoors issues like “who has the keys for the shed?” or “where is the key holder?” can present barriers between the children and materials for play.

## LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Although play with loose materials can have the greatest opportunities, when finally given free rein to travel across the whole of the school grounds, taking advantage of the widest variety of contexts. However, it is a good idea to locate the storage of materials near to the main or first focus of play, e.g. the sand area, and relatively close to the school.

## SHED LOADS OF IDEAS...

Every material you introduce is likely to need a slightly different means of storage. Timber structures are cheapest and most adaptable, e.g. for adding shelves, but where you want to place it against a school building then metal storage may be a better solution, as it can reduce the risk of fire damage. Open storage bays are a great way to provide a home for materials that can tolerate getting wet, and they provide the best ease of access

for the children. Suitable for long items such as den building rods, guttering, blocks and bricks, these builders’ yard bays give subtle invitations to children about construction and creativity. If out of school use becomes a problem, long items such as willow rods and guttering can be stored in bench like seating, if it can be found or made long enough not to compromise the valuable length of the materials. However, it is also worth leaving some items out such as tree stumps to see if they disappear or not. Also, trying to tidy these away each day is not really practical.

Large wheeled plastic trunks, which are waterproof and lockable make good temporary storage. Wheeling these out to a central position before play time makes it easier for large numbers of children to get materials out and tidy away without collisions or bottlenecks. Trolleys, barrows and trucks are popular and useful, especially when taking a large amount of materials to a new location.

Each material or piece of equipment deserves some special thought about its use, e.g. where feasible attach the hose to the wall next to the tap. Several hoses, which can join together are easier to use/wind/store. Straw bales can be kept dry with good tarpaulins. When ready to use, it is worth thinking through which way the straw is likely to blow for later collection—a location beside a mesh fence can reduce the mess.



*This place is like a building site!*

## TOOLS FOR THE JOB

The whole school tidying up quickly becomes an accepted and fun task at the end of each lunch break and as tidying skills develop the tidy up bell may denote a shorter time devoted to this task.

Good quality, adult size, stiff yard brushes (outdoor) are essential for sweeping sand back towards the sand area. Aided with wide adult hand shovels, the sand can be returned to the sand area with ease. Although sand will dry quickly and brush off most items, we suggest that the small world figures and animals have some additional care. These can easily get lost in the sand area or can become unappealing and worn. A large garden sieve is helpful with sand quickly washed off by the use of a watering can. The care adults show will affect the care and value the children attach to the materials.

Even if materials, such as pennies, are being kept out in the open, we suggest they are



*A report on the introduction of loose materials to three primary schools in North Lanarkshire*



brought to a chosen location to save getting in the way of mowers or to ensure a plentiful number for the next play session. Milk crates are great for play, but because they do not stack inside each other, if they cannot be left outside, they take up a lot of storage space.

Washing lines are an excellent addition for these projects. Although, schools which have out of hours usage may want to put these away after use. They are good for drying out soggy den building sheets and picnic rugs before being folded away (a lifelong skill to develop). However, the sheets on a washing line can also suggest a different type of den building themselves.

## CHUCK IT OUT

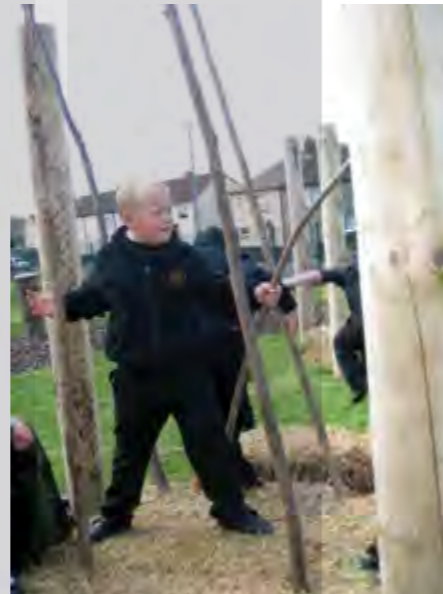
Although many materials can be sourced with a plea to parents, we would encourage you to be careful when deciding what to keep. This can be particularly important with small world figures and sand equipment, which can be gender and age stereotyping. Although it can be hard to discard items which have arrived for free, if the message is that the “toy” is for a very young child then it may put some of the older children off using it. This has consistently been the case with sand areas in public parks, which are usually located in toddler areas. It is also important to discard items when they become soiled or unattractive. North Lanarkshire Council has agreed to make special uplifts of discarded materials including shrub clippings, branches, etc. opening the way for the delivery of fresh materials.

## MANAGING RISK IN PLAY PROVISION

For many years there has been a growing awareness that we live in a culture where anxieties about children's safety dominate, leading to the creation of "cotton wool kids" who have a lack of experience in managing the challenges of the real world.

Over the last five years many play, education and green-space professionals have articulated the need for children to experience greater challenge and opportunities to manage risk. The value of challenges for children can be understood when you consider that children cannot learn to walk without falling, that one cannot know the meaning of 'burn' until it has been experienced, and resilience cannot be developed until difficulty has been overcome.

# Managing Risk in Play Provision



This place is like a building site!

In 2010 Play England published *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guidance* on behalf of the UK Government (and endorsed by the Scottish Government), which set out a new rationale for a more balanced approach to managing risk and how to achieve it. The second edition of this document will be available soon. More recently the Health and Safety Executive has endorsed this approach and reinforced its key features:

- That it is the responsibility of the play providers to decide on appropriate levels of risk (in some authorities this means the schools).
- That the legal responsibility is to risk assess and not necessarily conform to standards such as EN 1176.
- There are a number of other sources of guidance of appropriate risks, including that of the Play Safety Forum, the Forestry Commission and PLAYLINK.
- That the most appropriate way to risk assess the more challenging play features is to use risk-benefit assessment.

It is, however, crucially important that this risk benefit assessment process is only used where there are careful, balanced decisions to be made and that it is NOT NECESSARY to assess every feature or activity. In schools the support staff are already skilled at dynamic risk assessment in a constantly changing situation, with a wide variety of resources available to them; and in most cases this is sufficient in partnership with a good dose of common sense.

Also, even if there is no change in a particular feature or material, children's competence with it and their own ability to judge risk may well change. The key point in terms of the school playground is adults' intelligent observation and monitoring as a basis for flexibility.



A report on the introduction of loose materials to three primary schools in North Lanarkshire



**Managing Risk in Play Provision further states that:**

*'The attempted removal or mitigation of all hazards is not only impossible, but also potentially damaging. If the world is, by its nature, full of hazards, people need to learn to recognise and respond to them in order to protect themselves. Part of this learning is through self-directed experience: gaining skills by encountering, assessing and responding to hazards as they arise. Hazards, then, especially for children and young people, have some value in that they can be an opportunity for learning.'*



## RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT

Risk-benefit assessment is simply a method of risk assessment in which an evaluation of the potential benefits to children and others – for example play and social value – are considered alongside the potential risks associated with the provision. It allows providers to satisfy their legal obligation, while promoting a balanced approach. Risk-benefit assessment is a value-based process, one that implicitly recognises that benefits such as health, resilience, and having fun are different from risks and are therefore not easily compared. The essential point is to strike a balance between risks and benefits.

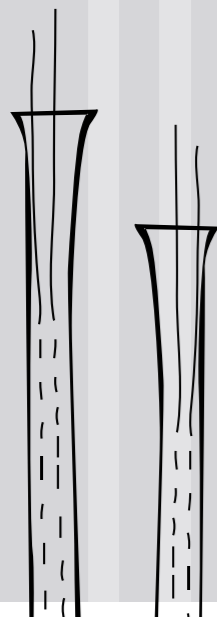


## CONVENTIONAL RISK ASSESSMENT

The difference between conventional risk assessment and risk benefit assessment is that conventional risk assessment generally starts by looking for hazards and does not explicitly mention benefits. This approach is designed for work place situations where there is no benefit in an employee getting injured whilst working, whereas part of the point of play is the enjoyment and challenge that taking risks invites (as well as the benefits).

The identification of what is too much risk should be considered carefully. For example, a child judges for her/himself whether to climb higher on a structure, whether to stay on the platform or jump off, or turn back. Here the child is in control, assessing their own competence and feeling confident enough to make a decision that is good for them at that moment. The next time, on the same platform, may be the time she/he jumps and in that act, and the decision-making processes leading to the decision, many benefits are generated: self-confidence, thoughtfulness, resilience, an expanded sense of self and a sense of achievement.

(However, NLC's view is that the identification of what is too much risk should be considered carefully. In the event of an accident/ incident the possibility of litigation would still apply. A risk assessment has to be carried out by law, under Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999 and as such NLC's policy is to ensure progressive improvements which will lead to a reduction in injury and ill health by the development and implementation of a risk management strategy in relation to health and safety. It is essential to have a risk assessment but the risk benefit assessment could be built into the risk assessment. Assistance is available from NLC's Learning and Leisure Services' health and safety team for schools in North Lanarkshire.)



## TECHNICAL INFORMATION AND VALUE-JUDGMENTS

Technical information refers to 'objective' features that, generally speaking, are not open to dispute. For example, the foundations of a structure are, or are not, weak. Determining the 'facts of the matter' in this case, generally requires common sense and a degree of expertise, though not necessarily excessively so. The information being sought in both cases is technical and broadly objective.

This is distinct from judgments of value. For example, whether a child should be allowed to climb to height 'x' is a judgment call. The basis of that judgment will include: views about children's inherent competence; views about the benefits of risk; views about the utility of accidents and mishaps. In fact, competence to address technical matters implies no competence to make judgments of value about play, which should now be the responsibility of the play provider, rather than an external figure such as a health and safety officer or a play inspector

**There is no legal duty to either eliminate or to reduce risk. The duty is to reduce risk 'so far as is reasonably practical'. What constitutes 'so far as is reasonably practical' is a judgment that can only be made in the context of the ethos of the school and the aspiration to make fuller provision for children's play and learning needs.**



*This place is like a building site!*

## SUPPORT FOR PRACTICAL RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT

PLAYLINK and Grounds for Learning continue to provide training and support for those managing risk in schools and for local authorities undertaking practical risk benefit assessment. When considering secondary risk management i.e. risk of the provider being prosecuted, there are some key elements of support. One is a completed risk benefit assessment, as a piece of evidence that a due process has been followed. The other is a simple policy document (or page) which states the ethos and aims when providing a more inspiring and challenging space. In any legal situation this policy would be the context in which a judgement would be made.

## THE ASSESSMENT FORM

Practical examples of completed risk benefit assessment forms are available on the PLAYLINK website [www.playlink.org.uk](http://www.playlink.org.uk). It is not necessary to slavishly complete every section, but it can be used to guide and document thinking as appropriate to your setting or feature. It should also include thinking about maintenance which will have an effect on the judgements to be made and how the risks may be managed.

*'You're not running a playground right if no one ever gets hurt'*

*Head, Thornlie PS*

*A report on the introduction of loose materials to three primary schools in North Lanarkshire*



## THORNIE PRIMARY SCHOOL: MANAGING RISK THOUGHTFULLY

Thornlie's re-designed playground includes a number of obviously higher risk features including a large climbing tree, fire pit, and sand area surrounded by a log wall with different fall heights on each side. Some of the loose materials, particularly stones and longer branches, also present obvious risk management issues.

The risk benefit process at Thornlie was participative, involving children, parents, teachers, playground supervisors and the janitor. This not only ensured a better assessment but also helped to secure support for the changes across the school community. From the school's point of view, children's involvement was seen as a key learning opportunity, to learn about risk and develop risk management skills. The process was also dynamic; rather than trying to develop elaborate management procedures for every possible eventuality, the approach was to closely observe how particular features were being used and to develop appropriate rules and procedures accordingly.

As an example of this dynamic approach, children were only allowed to play at the high end of the large climbing tree once they had demonstrated to staff that they could safely jump off. With time, staff recognised that children naturally stayed at a height at which they were comfortable. Another example relates to a discussion about whether the surface of the tree should be roughened up in some way to make it less slippery when wet. The school decided not to take this approach, believing instead that it is important for children to learn about the need to behave differently in response to different weather conditions. In this case, some accidents on the tree could be seen as a useful learning experience.

An important aim in reviewing the work done in the three participating North Lanarkshire Council (NLC) schools, was to produce materials that would help other schools embark on similar projects. Alongside the review, we worked with three more NLC primary schools; Baird Memorial in Cumbernauld, St Aidan's in Wishaw and Stepps, to help them get to a point where they could apply for funding. All of these schools were already actively thinking about their grounds and wanting to improve them.

We spent time at the schools, meeting the head teachers, and observing the grounds and how they are currently used. We shared observations and ideas with the head teachers and produced concept plans (shown here) and costs that could be used for funding applications.

# Three additional schools

Stepps Primary School was invited to participate partly because it is a PPP (public private partnership) school. In such schools, the building and the grounds are owned by and are the direct responsibility of the private partner, who employs the janitorial staff. This pattern of shared management and responsibility for school functions is the norm now for new build schools, created through the PPP scheme, and is therefore becoming increasingly common. We felt it was interesting and important to see if the redesign of the grounds and the introduction and regular use of loose materials would work in this partnership situation.

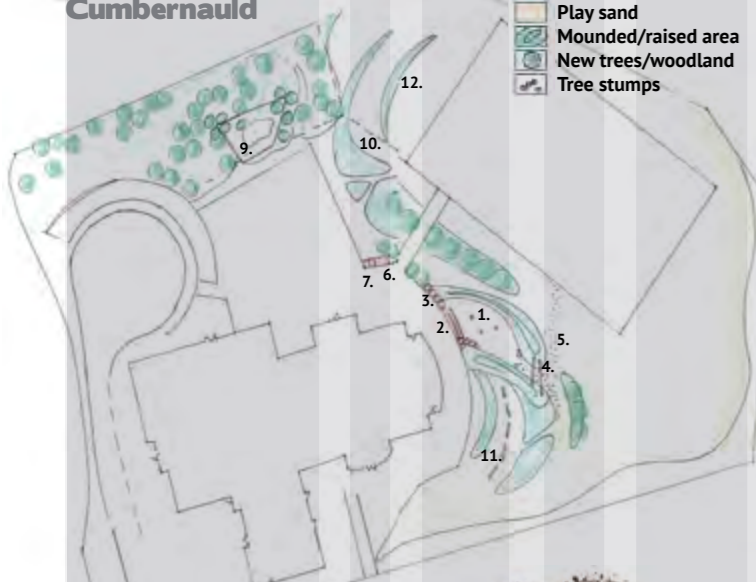
At the time of writing, the future for Stepps is uncertain. Balfour Beatty is the private partner and employs the two janitors who are on duty on the premises

from 6.00a.m. until any time between 10.00p.m. and midnight, depending on the evening use of the school and cultural centre that shares the site. The janitors are clearly doing a good job and involving themselves in the life of the school beyond their remit, and there is good communication, with monthly meetings between Balfour Beatty and the head teacher. While initial responses from Balfour Beatty seemed positive, faced with the reality of sand areas etc. doubts are setting in. Taking time to try and sort out any real and perceived problems, in order to negotiate a way forward, would seem very worthwhile, both for this school and future PPP schools.

## Baird Memorial

### Cumbernauld

- Mown grass
- Long grass
- Play sand
- Mounded/raised area
- New trees/woodland
- Tree stumps



#### FEATURES:

1. Timber mini lock gates
2. Sleeper steps
3. Tree stump edging
4. Balance beams between mounds
5. Wetland planting
6. Lockable storage
7. Open storage bays
8. Wheeled storage trunks
9. Relocated fencing around pond only
10. Remove high fencing
11. Existing trim trail
12. Terracing seating

PROJECT:	Baird Primary School
DRAWING:	Concept Plan with Loose Materials
SCALE:	Nts
DESIGN:	Judi Legg
DATE:	22.07.12

## St Aidans

### Wishaw

- Short grass/long grass
- New trees
- Long grass
- Play sand
- Boulders Shrubs/copse
- Mounded/raised area



#### FEATURES:

1. Lockable storage and open bays
2. Mini lock gates
3. Water half barrels
4. Shrub area/willow coppice with secret pathway
5. Mowing regime with playable features
6. Mounds

PROJECT:	St Aidan's Primary School
DRAWING:	Concept Plan and Loose Materials
SCALE:	Nts
DESIGN:	Judi Legg
DATE:	22.07.12

*This place is like a building site!*

## Stepps

### Cumbernauld

PROJECT:	Stepps Primary School
DRAWING:	Concept Plan with Loose Materials
SCALE:	Nts
DESIGN:	Judi Legg
DATE:	14.09.12

#### FEATURES:

1. Timber mini lock gates
2. Half barrels for water play
3. Lockable storage. Metal if against building
4. Open storage bays
5. Wheeled storage trunks
6. Brush wood boundary
7. New area with tree planting
8. Woodland play features
9. Seating circle

- Mown grass
- Long grass
- Play sand
- Mounded/raised area
- New trees/woodland
- Tree stumps



## Stepps

### Proposed fence changes

Remove timber fence as knot-weed has been cleared.

Remove weldmesh fence. Exact current location not known and not as Aedas plan

Hedge planting to protect boundary with houses

Brushwood boundary to prevent further woodland access

*A report on the introduction of loose materials to three primary schools in North Lanarkshire*





# Resources directory

## SUGGESTED LOOSE MATERIALS FOR USE IN SCHOOL AND PLAY PROJECTS

The materials, listed below, are suggested as those that have worked well in our school play projects. However, this is not intended as a catalogue, nor a definitive list, of what is possible. The best projects take the approach of constantly reviewing what is available, what make good combinations of materials, and developing a local network of suppliers of their own ideas and materials. Where a use is suggested it is important to remember that these materials are valuable, because they can be used in multiple and non-prescribed ways. The appropriate storage of these items should be considered, with ease of access for children at lunchtimes as a priority. An exit strategy for each material can be planned in advance - some of the materials will need to be replaced after a year, some are intended only for one week's use e.g. cardboard boxes. A large-scale bin from the local authority for green waste will help greatly.



This place is like a building site!

**1. RODS** for den building-Willow: 2.5-3.00m long, max 4cm diameter at base.  
*Alan Kain 07764 254298. £1.00 each.*

**2. PARACORD** for tying rods. String is also fine fine and better for threading through tarpaulin eyelets. Tool belts/aprons are useful for keeping string, scissors and other items.  
*Amazon, Archimedes: www.shop.forestschoools.com £5.00 per reel.*

**3. CAMOUFLAGE TARPULINS** with eyelets Min size 2m x 3m. Large tarps can be difficult to manage. Can be bought in bulk. Can cut large tarps into smaller ones  
*Amazon. £5.00 each.*

**4. THROWS/CURTAINS/SHEETS** potentially available from parents - provide a bespoke feel to den building and are materials with local relevance!  
*Parents, scrapstores. Free.*

**5. PENNIES/SLICES OF TIMBER** 200-300mm diameter, 30- 40mm deep Alan Kain 07764 254298 Landcare Solutions: 07798 856 340, Also try local tree surgeons tree surgeons, local authority.  
*£2.00 each.*

**6. TREE STUMPS** 300-450mm diameter, 300-400mm tall.  
*Landscape contractors e.g. Landcare 07798 856 340. Cosy: 01332 370152, www.cosydirect.com £10.00 each.*

**7. TIMBER SLEEPER OFFCUTS** Various sizes and lengths. Average size 250mm x 125mm x length.  
*Landscape contractors e.g. Landcare 07798 856 340. Also supplied by Cramb, Gargunock: 01786 860205. £18.00. 3m length.*

**8. WOODEN PLANKS** (for use with crates) Various lengths: Approx 1m/1.5m long x 200mm wide x 15/20mm. Manage rough wood re-splinters as required B&Q will provide offcuts for free. Builders merchants, recycling centres.

**9. DAIRY CRATES** for stacking Ensure minimum 35 crates.  
*Try various dairies.*

**10. STRAW BALES** Aim for smaller bales so children can move. Will fall apart fairly quickly (still useful). Plan for wind: Catch in nearby fence? Delivery can be main part of cost. Stocks can be preserved for later use if covered with tarpaulins.  
*Cosy : 01332 370152, Farmers/Agricultural supplies Suppy AND delivery by Chris Holland: chrisolland32@hotmail.com Landcare Solutions 07798 856 340. £40: per 5 bales plus p&p. £70: varies per 15 bales.*

**11. CARDBOARD BOXES** Range of sizes good but large boxes essential. Plan for summertime and keep outside for 1 week? Parcel tape and scissors useful. Also chalk.  
*Landcare. Free.*

**12. BRANCHES FOR DEN BUILDING** Spruce/laurel/rhododendron especially useful in winter. Suggested minimum length 3m.  
*Local authority Land Services Free.*

**13. EVERGREEN CLIPPINGS** for ephemeral arts. Small cuttings of e.g. leylandii, rhododendron, dogwood, laurel or berry/ cone bearing cuttings. Often seasonally available from local authority.  
*Collect from woods or own gardens as homework task. Plant supplies of suitable species in school. Free.*

**14. SHELLS** Can store or keep in sand area as natural beach.  
*Collect from beaches. Free.*

**15. TREE SEEDS AND BERRIES** Essential opportunity to learn about not eating anything unless okayed by adult.  
*Collect from woods or own gardens as homework task. Plant supplies of suitable species in school. Free.*

**16. MILK CARTONS** Sometimes threaded on ropes or used in water play  
*Children can collect and bring. Free.*

**17. MILK CARTON TOPS** Multi-coloured jewels with many uses.  
*Children can collect and bring. Free.*

**18. STRIPS OF FABRIC** For fence weaving. Approx 8 cm wide, as long s possible. Toning colours are effective rather than multicoloured.  
*Children can collect and bring. Free.*

**19. WOOL STRING, RIBBON, FABRIC AND TAPE** Range of projects including weaving, making bunting, dressing up, knitted furniture.  
*Children can collect and bring. Free.*

**20. HOSE** to fit to outside tap. As a tool to access water for play and learning, hoses are essential. Can be used to keep containers e.g. half barrels placed in sand area, supplied with water. Adult only access to hoses is more manageable and equitable.  
*DIY shops, garden centres. Free.*

**21. PLASTIC PIPES** Various dimensions and prices.  
*Builders/plumbers merchants, DIY stores.*

**22. GUTTERING AND CONNECTIONS.** Children are fascinated and engaged with transporting water via a gradient, around a site/space.  
*Builders/plumbers merchants, DIY stores. £6.00 per item.*

**23. SYPHONS, SIEVES, FUNNELS** Excellent for water and sand play.  
*Pound shops, B&Q. £2.00 each.*

**24. SAND EQUIPMENT:** Large plastic spades, plastic trowels, rakes for combing, buckets, containers, and moulds. Avoid early years equipment as will often put off older children and not be robust enough.  
*Amazon. £3.00 each.*

**25. RIVER PEBBLES** Diameters range from 100-200mm. Excellent for dam construction, ephemeral arts and letter work. Can be stored in rills/dry river channels.  
*Garden centres builders merchants Costs vary.*

**26. MINI WORLD FIGURES** Women work figures especially needed and rare. Avoid early years toys as can be off putting to older children.  
*Charity shops, recycling enterprises e.g. Good Green Fun: 01786 849216, Unit 32 Stirling Enterprise Park. £10.00 per large bag.*

**27. MINIWORLD ANIMALS** Spiders, mini-beast and dinosaurs are especially good value. Avoid early years toys, as can be off putting to older children.  
*Charity shops, recycling enterprises e.g. Good Green Fun: 01786 849216, Unit 32 Stirling Enterprise Park. £10.00 per large bag.*

**28. MINIWORLD VEHICLES** Especially construction vehicles for use in sand. Children are fascinated and engaged with transporting water via a gradient, around a site/space.  
*Charity shops, recycling enterprises e.g. Good Green Fun: 01786 849216, Unit 32 Stirling Enterprise Park. £10.00 large bag.*

**29. HAMMOCKS** Bushcraft hammocks. Adult fixing recommended.  
*Archimedes: http://shop.forestschoools.com £113.33 plus p&peach.*

**30. PICNIC BLANKETS** Ideal for creating relaxing islands of play on the tarmac. Waterproof backed but useful to have an outdoor washing line for airing if damp.  
*Amazon. £7.00 each.*

**31. CHUNKY PLAYGROUND CHALK**  
*Cosy: 01332 370152, www.cosydirect.com £4.50 + p&p for 52 pieces.*

**32. VARIOUS ITEMS** Scrapstore: 'Recyclable Creatables' 25, Kelvin Rd North, Lenziemill Industrial Estate, Cumbernauld tel 01236 728339.

**33. STORAGE SHED** 0.91 x 1.82m  
*ShedsWorld: 0844 931 1005. £219.99 + £19.99 delivery each.*

**34. WHEELED PLASTIC STORAGE TRUNK** Lockable and waterproof.  
*Solent Plastics. Tel:023 8057 2500. sales@solentplastics.co.uk £43.15 ex vat each.*

# Guide to Funding Natural Play

## Loose Materials Projects in North Lanarkshire Schools

This funding guide is written specifically to help other North Lanarkshire Council primary schools devise and implement the type and scale of schemes implemented at Thornlie, Banton and Knowetop Primary Schools as described in this report. These schemes include: physical changes to the school grounds, the introduction of 'loose materials' (including storage), and training and support for all school staff. These schemes are quite modest and can be achieved for around £15,000.


Before making any funding applications you will need a concept plan of the changes you want to make to your grounds and outline costs for these changes, such as the loose materials required and a programme of training and support for teachers. Three more North Lanarkshire Council primary schools, Stepps, Baird Memorial and St Aidan's are being supported to proceed with this initiative and this report includes their concept plans and outline costs (see pages 46-47). This should be useful in giving you an idea of what is involved, as well as much of the other material in this report.


However, plans must be individually developed for each school and the process of doing this is as important as the outcome itself, in so far as it should start to inform and enthuse everyone involved, and build support for the project. It will also provide additional information that will be valuable in making funding applications, in terms of demonstrating the need and support for your project.


The cost of getting a concept plan and outline costs is likely to be in the region of £1,000. Within North Lanarkshire Council, the Play Services team and the Greenspace Development Service (Landscape) can help with this. Other organisations that can provide assistance are Grounds for Learning and PLAYLINK. Private landscape architects are a further possibility, although these may be more expensive.


Unless your school already has funds to allocate, you will be likely to need to apply to more than one grant provider and/or undertake your own fundraising events. In planning several funding applications you will need to think about how the various elements of your project can be presented and packaged separately. Volunteer involvement in both the planning and implementing of a project is always a benefit in the eyes of funders and can sometimes be costed in, as a contribution in kind (in most grant applications of this kind, applicants are asked to put a monetary value on volunteer contributions, usually using a widely accepted scale, and this figure is then included in the project budget). It may also be worth approaching local businesses for sponsorship or donations.


The grant providers listed here are all possible funders for these types of project. As schools and school grounds are generally considered to be the funding responsibility of the local authority, it is essential to demonstrate that these projects offer something more in terms of community involvement and community access. It is usually worth making telephone contact with someone in the organisation to discuss your project before submitting an application.


 Schools themselves. Grounds Groups, PTA's and Parent Councils are also eligible to apply as long as they have a constitution.


 Projects that enable people to take part in art, sport, heritage and community activities as well as those that promote education, the environment and health in the local community.


 They cannot support activities or services which the school has a statutory responsibility to provide. They will support activities that take place immediately before or after school, during lunch breaks and/or in the school holidays.


 Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis and a decision is given within eight weeks.


 Charities and not for profit organisations including schools


 Funds organisations whose core work supports children's education and welfare and children with disabilities. Funding given provides practical benefits such as equipment and resources for projects. Has supported playground equipment, 'outdoor classrooms', sensory gardens, before and after school clubset.


 Organisation needs to be local to a Tesco store.

 Grants for children's education and welfare, apply between 1 December - 31 January for decision at end of April or between 1 May - 30 June for a decision at end of September. These dates are used annually.

 Nursery, primary and secondary establishments within the CSGN area, which includes North Lanarkshire


-  • Develop school grounds for learning and natural play  
• Develop the surrounding area of woods and greenspace for learning and natural play (as defined by CSGN)\*  
• Provide equipment for learning and natural play outdoors (learning equipment, tools and clothing)  
• Contribute to training or other resources for outdoor learning and natural play


-  • The assessment of need (e.g. area of deprivation)  
• The increase in use of school grounds and local woods and green space in the CSGN area for learning  
• Use of the school ground audit tool (available on the CSGN website).

 Applications can be made until 11th January 2013. A decision will be made within 28 working days of receipt of the application form. Funding will be awarded on a first come first served basis according to the date of receipt of the application form until the closing date or earlier if the fund becomes fully taken up. Funding must be used, project completed and reported on before 1st March 2013.

### BIG LOTTERY FUND AWARDS FOR ALL


This is an important potential funder for these projects. It does not matter if your school has already had funding from Awards For All as long as you have successfully completed and reported on former projects.


 £500 - £10,000

 0845 4102030  
www.awardsforall.org.uk


### TESCO CHARITY TRUST COMMUNITY AWARDS

(There is also a 'larger grant' award which is currently under review)

 £1000 - £4000


 0845 612 3575  
www.tescopl.com


### CENTRAL SCOTLAND GREEN NETWORK LEARNING OUTDOORS FUND

 £200 - £350


 01501 824190  
www.centralscotlandgreennetwork.org

### CO-OPERATIVE MEMBERSHIP COMMUNITY FUND

 £100 - £2,000


 0161 827 0844  
www.co-operative.coop/membership/local-communities/community-fund/funding-selection-criteria/

### B&Q ONE PLANET LIVING GRANT

 material for £50 - £250


 www.diy.com


### SCOTTISH COMMUNITY FOUNDATION (SCF)


 £100 - £2,000


 0161 827 0844  
www.co-operative.coop/membership/local-communities/community-fund/funding-selection-criteria/


### ERNEST COOK TRUST SMALL GRANTS SCHEME


 £100 - £2,000


 0161 827 0844  
www.co-operative.coop/membership/local-communities/community-fund/funding-selection-criteria/


 Schools cannot apply directly. Grounds Groups, PTA's and Parent Councils are eligible to apply.

 A very wide range of projects and activities are funded.

-  • The group must carry out positive work in the community  
• The project must address a community issue  
• The project must provide a good long term benefit to the community  
• Co-operative values and principles must be supported  
• Ideally, the project should be innovative in its approach.


 Ongoing


 The Scottish Community Foundation has a national programme of express grants and local programmes that devise their own criteria.


 Schools themselves cannot apply, but PTA's, Parent Councils, Grounds Groups etc. can as long as they have a constitution, their own bank account and produce their own accounts. Their total income in its last financial year must have been no more than £250,000.


Express Grants are available up to £2,000. They support a very wide range of activities including these types of projects. Applications for the express grant are ongoing. Local grants - contact SCF to find out whether local grants are available in your school's area.


 Schools, registered charities and not for profit organisations

 Projects that encourage young people's interest in the countryside, the environment, the arts or aim to raise literacy and numeracy; also, projects that encourage the continuation of rural skills and crafts.

 Applications are expected to link in with the Curriculum for Excellence or recognised qualifications.

 Applications considered every other month.

 This grant is available to schools and groups within a twenty-mile radius of a B&Q store.

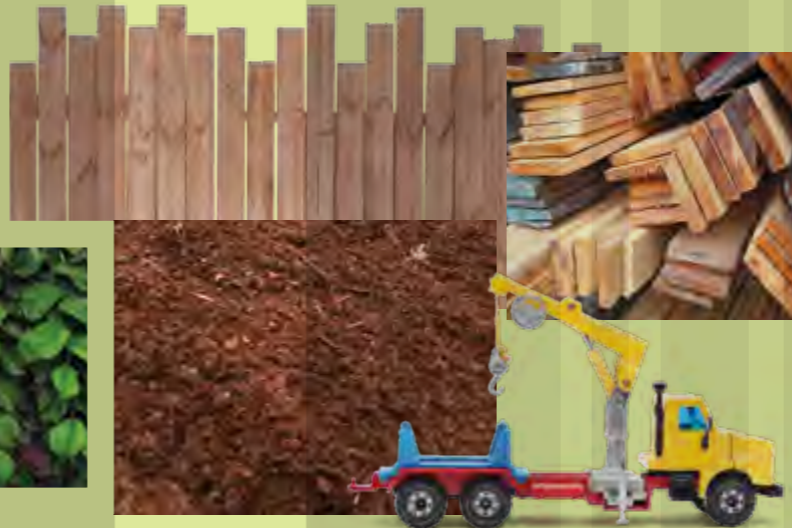
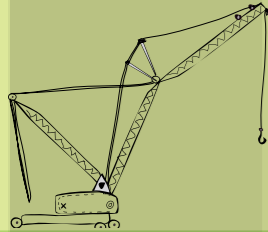
 The scheme provides B&Q materials from £50 - £250 as well as waste materials and goods unfit for sale (but not dangerous). Applicants have to contact the store manager at their local store to discuss their project. Applications are ongoing.

					
Who can apply?	Nature of projects	Award criteria	Application deadline	Grant Value	Contact details

*This place is like a building site!*

# Appendix 1:

## Baird Memorial Primary School cost estimates



### Schedule of Works

	Quantity	Unit	Rate	£ p	Subtotals
<b>Schedule 1</b>					
<b>Preliminaries</b>					
General All soil and crushed material arising on site to be kept on site for mounding etc Where ever possible materials are to be retained and re used on site.					
<b>Schedule 2</b>					
<b>Demolitions</b>					
Remove and dispose weldmesh fence 2.4m high	30	lin m		300.00	
Remove and dispose kerb edge at front sand area	14	lin m	3.00	42.00	
					342.00
<b>Schedule 3</b>					
<b>Excavations and Earthworks</b>					
Note: all removed turf, tar and soils to be retained on site and compacted/crushed, and used to form the banks and bunds. All turf, topsoil and subsoil to be excavated in layers and stored on site in separate storage bunds for re-use on site. Strip all turf and topsoil from areas of excavation and store on site for reuse.					
Excavate soils to create 400mm depth at sand area. All sand areas to have fall towards outflow/wetland area. Arising compacted to create mounds. Retain topsoils for top layer.	190	sqm			
Cut and fill soils to create terracing at end of west end of pitch arising to be compacted to create mounds. Retain topsoils for top layer	120		4.00	480.00	
Excavate soils to create 300mm deep x 1m wide dry ditch from sand area to pitch. Compact soils hard in ditch Arisings to be compacted within mounds. Retain topsoils for top layer					350.00
					250.00
<b>Schedule 4</b>					
<b>Landscape Works</b>					
Fit outside tap.				200.00	
Create two step entry to sand area with timber sleepers (125x250mm x 3m wide),	12	lin m	28.00	336.00	
Install upright tree trunks (1m lengths) into 300mm concrete haunching to complete edging at front of sand, avoiding pinch points and finger traps with 2 side slices of each stump. Backfill at tarmac edge with concrete or tar.					500.00
Install simple double beam crossings onto concrete pads.	2	no	75.00	150.00	
Construct 3 simple lock gate frames from timber sleepers into concrete, at base of sand.	3	no		500.00	
Supply and install river boulders: Approx diameter 200mm, to fill 10m <sup>2</sup> . Sample to be approved by CA.	10	sqm	12.00	120.00	
Supply and install semi permeable membrane to river bed!	25	sqm	2.00	50.00	
Supply and install 20mm gravel to a minimum depth of 100mm. Sample to be approved by CA.	25	m <sup>2</sup>	4.00	100.00	
Supply and install 300mm depth play sand onto geomembrane. (Sand spec and sample to be provided for approval.)	100	sqm	28.00	2,800.00	
Construct 2 side by side timber open storage bays 1.5m x 1.5m x 1.2m high onto existing tarmac.					850.00
Relocate 30m existing timber fence at woodland to fence off area around pond (24m). Include for new uprights.		item			1,100.00
					7,786.00

This place is like a building site!

### Schedule of Works

	Quantity	Unit	Rate	£ p	Subtotals
<b>Schedule 6</b>					
<b>Planting and Turfing</b>					
Plug planting of wetland plants by children.					200.00
Turfing to mounds only.	130	sqm	4.20	546.00	
Grass seeding to terracing, including ground preparation and application of seed. Include for making good trafficked areas, Tree planting.	100	sqm	2.20	220.00	
		sum			600.00
					1,566.00
<b>Schedule 7</b>					
<b>Equipment</b>					
2 x wheeled storage trunks.		2			90.00
Den building rods.		60			150.00
Tarpaulins.		10			75.00
Loose tree stumps.		40			200.00
Camouflage net.		10			70.00
Timber discs "pennies".		130			130.00
Guttering.		7			30.00
Straw bales.		30			250.00
Miniworld figures/animals/vehicles.					60.00
Sand equipment.					40.00
Crates.		30			300.00
Planks.					20.00
Chalk.		3			30.00
					1,445.00
<b>Schedule 8</b>					
<b>Other Works</b>					
Allow for decompaction of trafficked grass areas during construction. Supply method statement for approval by CA.					
					<b>Total Nett Cost</b>
					11,139
					<b>Contingency</b>
					700.00
					<b>TOTAL WORKS COST</b>
					11,839.00
No vat payable on school funded works					
					<b>NON CONTRACT COSTS</b>
Additional design/project management.					950.00
5 x all staff practical training days	4		450	1,800.00	
					<b>TOTAL NON CONTRACT COSTS</b>
					2,750.00
					<b>TOTAL PROJECT COSTS</b>
					14,589.00

A report on the introduction of loose materials to three primary schools in North Lanarkshire

I make full use of and value the opportunities I am given to improve and manage my learning and, in turn, I can help to encourage learning and confidence in others.

HWB 0-11a / HWB 1-11a / HWB 2-11a

I can follow and understand rules and procedures, developing my ability to achieve personal goals. I recognise and can adopt different roles in a range of practical activities.

HWB 1-23a

## Appendix 2: The curriculum for excellence: outcomes and experiences that relate to play (NLC)

I understand that people can feel alone and can be misunderstood and left out by others. I am learning how to give appropriate support.

HWB 0-08a / HWB 1-08a / HWB 2-08a

In everyday activity and play, I explore and make choices to develop my learning and interests. I am encouraged to use and share my experiences.

HWB 0-19a

I know that friendship, caring, sharing, fairness, equality and love are important in building positive relationships. As I develop and value relationships, I care and show respect for myself and others.

HWB 0-05a / HWB 1-05a / HWB 2-05a

I am developing my understanding of the human body and can use this knowledge to maintain and improve my wellbeing and health.

HWB 0-15a / HWB 1-15a / HWB 2-15a

I value the opportunities I am given to make friends and be part of a group in a range of situations.

HWB 0-14a / HWB 1-14a / HWB 2-14a

I am learning to assess and manage risk, to protect myself and others, and to reduce the potential for harm when possible.

HWB 0-16a / HWB 1-16a / HWB 2-16a

I make full use of and value the opportunities I am given to improve and manage my learning and, in turn, I can help to encourage learning and confidence in others.

HWB 0-11a / HWB 1-11a / HWB 2-11a

I know and can demonstrate how to keep myself and others safe and how to respond in a range of emergency situations.

HWB 0-17a / HWB 1-17a / HWB 2-17a

I know and can demonstrate how to travel safely.

HWB 0-18a / HWB 1-18a / HWB 2-18a

As I listen and talk in different situations, I am learning to take turns and am developing my awareness of when to talk and when to listen.

LIT 0-02a/ENG 0-03a

I am developing skills and techniques and improving my level of performance and fitness.

HWB 1-22a



Through taking part in a variety of events and activities, I am learning to recognise my own skills and abilities as well as those of others.

HWB 1-19a

Opportunities to carry out different activities and roles in a variety of settings have enabled me to identify my achievements, skills and areas for development. This will help me to prepare for the next stage in my life and learning.

HWB 2-19a

I am learning to move my body well, exploring how to manage and control it and finding out how to use and share space.

HWB 0-21a

I am developing a sense of size and amount by observing, exploring, using and communicating with others about things in the world around me.

MNU 0-01a

I explore and discover the interesting features of my local environment to develop an awareness of the world around me.

SOC 0-07a

I am discovering ways that I can link actions and skills to create movement patterns and sequences. This has motivated me to practise and improve my skills to develop control and flow.

HWB 1-21a

I am developing my movement skills through practice and energetic play.

HWB 0-22a

As I encounter new challenges and contexts for learning, I am encouraged and supported to demonstrate my ability to select, adapt and apply movement skills and strategies, creatively, accurately and with control.

HWB 2-21a

Within and beyond my place of learning I am enjoying daily opportunities to participate in physical activities and sport, making use of available indoor and outdoor space.

HWB 1-25a

I use drama to explore real and imaginary situations, helping me to understand my world.

EXA 0-14a

As I encounter new challenges and contexts for learning, I am encouraged and supported to demonstrate my ability to select, adapt and apply movement skills and strategies, creatively, accurately and with control.

HWB 2-21a

I am aware of my own and others' needs and feelings especially when taking turns and sharing resources. I recognise the need to follow rules.

HWB 0-23a

I am enjoying daily opportunities to participate in different kinds of energetic play, both outdoors and indoors.

HWB 0-25a

I can describe and recreate the characteristics of my local environment by exploring the features of the landscape.

SOC 1-07a

I value the opportunities I am given to make friends and be part of a group in a range of situations.

HWB 0-14a / HWB 1-14a / HWB 2-14a

I explore and appreciate the wonder of nature within different environments and have played a part in caring for the environment.

SOC 0-08a

I can consider ways of looking after my school or community and can encourage others to care for their environment.

SOC 1-08a

I make decisions and take responsibility in my everyday experiences and play, showing consideration for others.

SOC 0-17a

Through discovery, natural curiosity and imagination, I explore ways to construct models or solve problems.

TCH 0-14a

As I play and learn, I am developing my understanding of what is fair and unfair and why caring and sharing are important.

RME 0-09a

Throughout my learning, I share my thoughts with others to help further develop ideas and solve problems.

TCH 0-11a

Within real and imaginary settings, I am developing my practical skills as I select and work with a range of materials, tools and software.

TCH 0-12a

I am experiencing enjoyment and achievement on a daily basis by taking part in different kinds of energetic physical activities of my choosing, including sport and opportunities for outdoor learning, available at my place of learning and in the wider community.

HWB 2-25a

Having evaluated my work, I can adapt and improve, where appropriate, through trial and error or by using feedback.

TCH 1-14b / TCH 2-14b

Throughout my learning, I explore and discover different ways of representing my ideas in imaginative ways.

TCH 0-15a

Through everyday experiences and play with a variety of toys and other objects, I can recognise simple types of forces and describe their effects.

SCN 0-07a

By investigating forces on toys and other objects, I can predict the effect on the shape or motion of objects.

SCN 1-07a

Through creative play, I explore different materials and can share my reasoning for selecting materials for different purposes.

SCN 0-15a

Through exploring properties and sources of materials, I can choose appropriate materials to solve practical challenges.

SCN 1-15a

When I engage with others, I know when and how to listen, when to talk, how much to say, when to ask questions and how to respond with respect.

LIT 1-02a

When I engage with others, I can respond in ways appropriate to my role, show that I value others' contributions and use these to build on thinking.

LIT 2-02a

I have experimented with everyday items as units of measure to investigate and compare sizes and amounts in my environment, sharing my findings with others.

MNU 0-11a

I can estimate how long or heavy an object is, or what amount it holds, using everyday things as a guide, then measure or weigh it using appropriate instruments and units.

MNU 1-11a

I can use my knowledge of the sizes of familiar objects or places to assist me when making an estimate of measure.

MNU 2-11a

I can show my understanding of values such as caring, sharing, fairness, equality and love.

RME 1-09b

I have spotted and explored patterns in my own and the wider environment and can copy and continue these and create my own patterns.

MTH 0-13a

I can continue and devise more involved repeating patterns or designs, using a variety of media.

MTH 1-13

I enjoy investigating objects and shapes and can sort, describe and be creative with them.

MTH 0-16a

I have the freedom to discover and choose ways to create images and objects using a variety of materials.

EXA 0-02a

Working on my own and with others, I use my curiosity and imagination to solve design problems.

EXA 0-06a

I have the opportunity and freedom to choose and explore ways that I can move rhythmically, expressively and playfully.

EXA 0-08a

I enjoy creating short dance sequences, using travel, turn, jump, gesture, pause and fall, within safe practice.

EXA 1-08a

I can explore and choose movements to create and present dance, developing my skills and techniques.

EXA 2-08a

Through discovery and imagination, I can develop and use problem-solving strategies to construct models.

TCH 1-14a / TCH 2-14a

## Banton Primary School.

### LOOSE MATERIALS TRAINING PROGRAMME

**Session 1: General introduction to loose materials; explaining the playground design, storage and selection of loose materials.**

- 2.00 P.M. - 3.00 P.M.

Participants: all staff except the head and principal teacher.

**General introduction to loose materials in the playground**

- Loose materials presentation and discussion
- About sand and water
- The role of adults in the playground: observers, facilitators, scaffolders.

**Explaining the Banton design**

- 3.10 P.M. - 4.30 P.M.

Participants: all teaching staff including head teacher and principal teacher.

**Recap above**

**Practicalities**

- Discuss storage options
- Selection of loose materials for ordering

**Discuss and agree the form and content of next training session**

**Session 2: Hands on with general loose materials.**

Participants: all staff and all children

Loose materials available included: pennies, rods, blankets, pebbles, stumps, string scissors and small figures. The role of staff was to observe the children playing during these mixed class and break time sessions. Observation guidelines were available.



- 9.10 A.M. - 9.45 A.M.

P1 – 3 children

Initial ground rules were established and there was discussion after each session.

- 9.45 A.M. - 10.20 A.M.

P4 – P7 children

As above

Lunch break session with all children

- 3.30 A.M. - 4.30 A.M.

Meeting with head teacher to review and discuss the day.

**Session 3: Sand and water; den building; agreeing a clothes policy.**

Participants: all staff, all children, parents.

- 12.00 P.M. - 1.00 P.M.

Lunch break session: sand and water

- 2.00 P.M. - 2.40 P.M.

Den building, sand and water

- 2.40 P.M. - 2.55 P.M.

Review and discussion with children and parents

**Session 4: Cardboard and Transportation.**

Participants: all staff, all children. Families and friends involved in helping gather materials.

- 9.40 A.M. - 9.45 A.M.

P4 – P7 children

- 9.10 A.M. - 9.45 A.M.

P1 – 3 children

- 12.30 P.M. - 1.30 P.M.

Lunch time session

- 2.00 P.M. - 3.30 P.M.

Discussion with head teacher to review and plan for sustaining loose materials work

# Appendix 3:

## The Loose Materials Training Programmes

*These are the training programmes that actually ran. They differ from the programmes that were originally planned, both in terms of dates and content. In practice, in order to be useful and relevant, the training had to fit in with the stage that the physical re-design was at, and the stage that the school was at with its own use of and planning for the outdoor space. Outdoor practical sessions are also, to some extent, weather dependent. All of the practical hands on sessions included preparation and setting out of materials and clearing up.*

*Before the training programme began, a day was spent observing the current use of the playground at each of the schools. This helped to inform the planning of the training.*

## Knowetop Primary School.

### LOOSE MATERIALS TRAINING PROGRAMME

**Session 1: General introduction to children's play and loose materials; explaining the playground design.**

Participants: all staff including Visual Impairment Unit staff

- 1.30 P.M. - 2.30 P.M.

All support staff

- 3.10 P.M. - 4.10 P.M.

All teaching staff.

Each staff group participated in three presentation/discussion topics

- 'Putting the play back into playgrounds' - children's play; the value of loose materials; the role of adults
- The Knowetop design and the principles underlying it
- Questions and discussion.

**Session 2: Whole school staff session (in-service training day).**

Participants: all staff (except the janitor) including Visual Impairment Unit staff.

This was the first day of the new school year and over the summer many physical changes to the playground had occurred, though some work remained to be done.

The programme for the day was as follows:

- 1.00 P.M. - 1.20 P.M.

Setting out the aims and purpose of the day

- 1.20 P.M. - 2.20 P.M.

The playground - including an introduction to the loose materials, having a go at den building, putting out the flags

- 2.20 P.M. - 2.40 P.M.

Principles of risk benefit approach to risk assessment

- 2.40 P.M. - 2.50 P.M.

Practical risk benefit assessment exercise, conducted in groups, in the playground.

- 2.50 P.M. - 3.00 P.M.

Sharing and discussing risk benefit assessments.

**Session 3: Hands on with loose materials.**

Participants: all children, playground support staff; P1 and P5 teachers; Visual Impairment Unit staff.

The materials available during the class group sessions were: rods, string, scissors, pegs, throws, pennies and chalk. During the lunchtime session these materials were available, plus small figures, ephemeral natural materials (leaves, twigs, cones etc.) and sand equipment.

Each class session began with introductions and setting of basic ground rules. Adults observed play, jotting down thoughts and observations (observation guidelines were available).



- 9.15 A.M. - 10.30 A.M.

P5 class session

- 11.00 A.M. - 12.15 P.M.

P1 class session

- 12.30 P.M. - 1.20 P.M.

Lunchtime session.

Afternoon meetings with Visual Impairment Unit staff and with head teacher

- 1.30 P.M. - 3.00 P.M.

**Session 4: Woodland materials day.**

This session was prompted by the existence of adjacent woodland and the school's desire to access it, in the future, directly from the school playground. The purpose of the day was to introduce children and staff to the pleasure and potential of woodland materials for play, and get people thinking about how they might develop and use their own woodland in the future.

North Lanarkshire Council's Arboricultural Team was contacted and agreed to leave large quantities of tree and shrub cuttings, and prunings, including quite large branches.

Additional materials were added including quantities of willow herb and willow; tree seeds (cones, conkers, acorns etc.); fabric and wool, laminated pictures of examples of ephemeral art; and existing loose materials including rods and pennies. The children themselves were asked to bring plastic milk and water containers.

It was anticipated that these materials would suggest activities such as den



building, nest making, tree dressing, fence weaving and ephemeral art, although this was not intended to preclude anything the children happened to do/discover themselves with the materials provided.

On the day, the materials brought by the Arboricultural Team were set out in a central position. Some fence weaving was started and a basket of suitable materials left nearby for children to use to continue weaving. A few plastic containers were threaded onto string. The other materials were set out invitingly, and some materials that the school already had, such as rods, pennies and log sections were added. Some materials were kept back to ensure that there were sufficient supplies for the whole day.

The sessions were as follows:

- 9.15 A.M. - 10.30 A.M.

P 2 class session

- 11.00 A.M. - 12.15 P.M.

P 4 class session

- 12.30 P.M. - 1.20 P.M.

lunchtime session.

A review meeting took place with the head teacher from 3.00pm - 3.30 p.m. Thornlie runs a range of clubs on Wednesday afternoons. The Outdoor Club (which usually concentrates mainly on gardening) participated in the afternoon sessions.

## Thornlie Primary School.

### LOOSE MATERIALS TRAINING PROGRAMME

**Session 1: General introduction to loose materials in the playground.**

Participants: all teaching staff.

- 3.00 P.M. - 5.00 P.M.

- Loose materials presentation and discussion
- The role of adults in the playground

**Session 2: General introduction to loose materials in the playground.**

Participants: all playground staff and janitor.

- 10.00 A.M. - 12.00 P.M.

- Loose materials presentation and discussion



- The role of adults in the playground: observers, facilitators, scaffolders.

**Session 3: Using the fire pit.**

Participants: all teaching staff and the janitor.

- 3.00 P.M. - 3.45 P.M.

- Feedback from staff since last training sessions
  - Why have fire and fire pit guidance.
- 3.45 P.M. - 4.15 P.M.
- Trying out the fire pit, including building, lighting, extinguishing and clearing up
  - Making 'fire porridge' sculptures.

- 4.15 P.M. - 4.30 P.M.

Discussion and next steps.

**Session 4: Mini-worlds; sand and water; introduction to risk benefit approach.**

- 12.30 P.M. - 1.30 P.M.

Participants: P1 - 3 children and playground staff.

**Introducing mini worlds to the playground.**

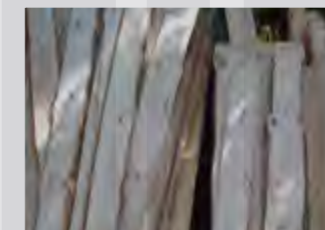
Materials include: baskets of small figures, animals, cars etc.; natural resources such as leaves, twigs, blossom, shells, gravel; small pieces of fabric of various shapes, sizes and patterns; chalks and sand equipment.

For the last ten minutes, teaching staff visited the playground and observed the session.

- 2.00 P.M. - 3.00 P.M.

Participants: Outdoor Club children with teacher and selected younger children.

**Introducing water and sand equipment.**



Materials included a selection of sand equipment: a range of buckets and spades; sand wheels; things for marking/combing sand; plastic diggers and tip-up trucks; a range of containers; large pebbles; guttering; sleeper sections (for propping up guttering); and a hose.

- 3.00 P.M. - 3.45 P.M.

Participants: teaching staff.

Principles of risk benefit approach and introduction to risk benefit assessment.

Practical risk benefit assessment tasks left for staff to complete.



**Session 5: Sand and water during break; den making; straw bales, palettes and planks.**

Lunchtime session

- 12.40 P.M. - 1.30 P.M.

Participants: all children and playground staff.

**Introducing sand and water and den making during break time.**

Sand and water with younger children (joined by some older ones).

Den making with older children.

- 2.00 P.M. - 3.00 P.M.

Afternoon session

Participants: outdoor Club children (approx 8) and teacher.

Straw bales, palettes and planks with school Outdoor Club children.

# Appendix 4

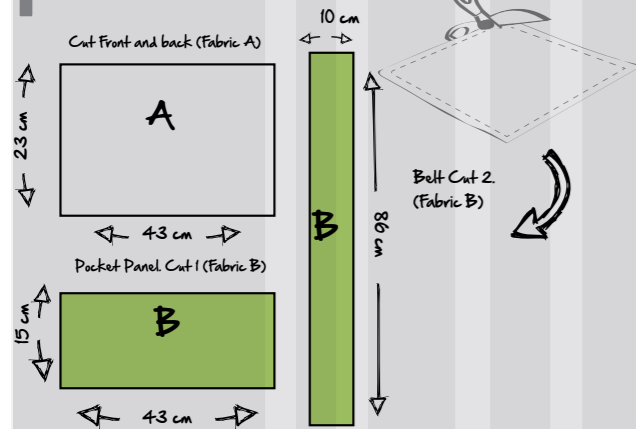
## Tool apron

These instructions can be adapted to suit your purposes, or the tools and supplies you wish to hold in your tool apron, by varying stitching making the tool pockets. It's your apron, so you can make it the longer or shorter to suit.

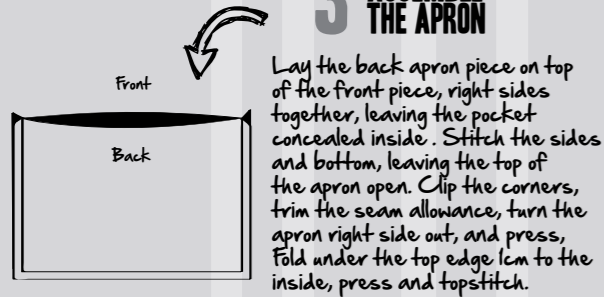
Our finished size is 20cm x 40cm with a belt of 168cm

### 1 CUT YOUR FABRIC

- With fabric A cut one front and one back piece
- With fabric B cut one pocket panel and two belt pieces



### 3 ASSEMBLE THE APRON



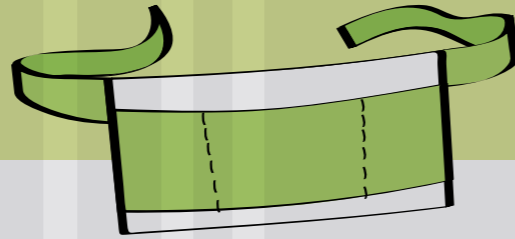
Lay the back apron piece on top of the front piece, right sides together, leaving the pocket concealed inside. Stitch the sides and bottom, leaving the top of the apron open. Clip the corners, trim the seam allowance, turn the apron right side out, and press, fold under the top edge 1cm to the inside, press and topstitch.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 43 x 46cm of fabric for the apron body (fabric A)
- Make the pocket 25 x 86cm of contrasting fabric for pockets and belt (fabric B)
- Sewing supplies

### WHAT YOU'LL DO

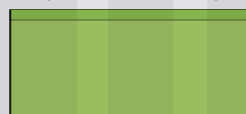
- Cut your fabric
- Make the pocket
- Assemble the apron
- Make and attach the belt



### 2 MAKE THE POCKET

Press under the top edge of the pocket panel 0.5cm, then repeat for another 1cm. Edgestitch along the bottom fold. With right sides facing up, pin the pocket panel to the front apron panel.

Fold, press and stitch at top

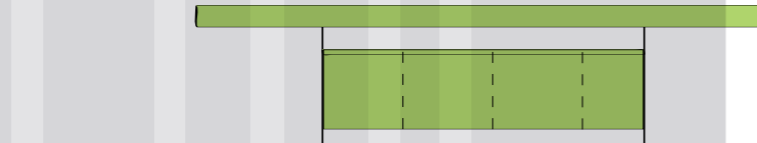


Front

Stitch dividers for your pockets, back tacking at the top of each pocket panel to reinforce. There is no need to stitch the sides or bottom as that will happen in the next step.

### 4 MAKE AND ATTACH THE BELT

With right sides facing each other, stitch the two belt pieces together to make one long strip. Press under the edges 1cm on all sides. Fold the belt in half lengthways and topstitch. Centre the belt on top of the apron, aligning the top edges of the belt and apron. Pin the belt in place and topstitch it to the apron along the length (following the stitching on both sides of the belt), backtacking at the ends.



This place is like a building site!

## References

'Play for a Change Play, Policy and Practice: A review of contemporary perspectives'

(2008) Stuart Lester and Wendy Russell, University of Gloucester publ. National Children's Bureau.

'Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces'

(2008) Aileen Shackell, Nicola Butler, Phil Doyle, David Ball publ. Play England

'Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide'

(2008) David Ball, Tim Gill and Bernard Spiegel publ. Play England

'Report of 'Play Space Study Tour to Berlin' for Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park'

(2007) Sue Gutteridge

'Special Places, Special People: the hidden curriculum of school grounds'

(1994) Wendy Titman publ. by Worldwide Fund for Nature and learning through Landscape Trust

Evaluation of South Gloucestershire Council's Outdoor play and learning (OPAL) programme

(2011) Stuart Lester and Wendy Russell

'Planning for Play'

(1968) Lady Allen of Hurtwood publ. by Thames and Hudson



## Report

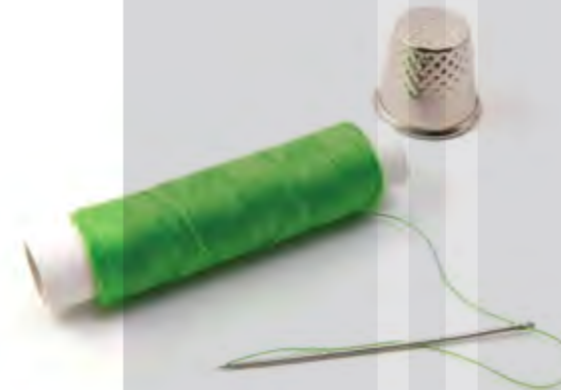
PLAYLINK

This report was written by:

Sue Gutteridge: PLAYLINK Associate and play consultant; former manager of Stirling Council's innovative Play Service.

Judi Legg: PLAYLINK Associate; play space designer; designer for the Grounds for Learning Natural Play project and the current national Scottish Government Play Project.

PLAYLINK is multi-disciplinary consultancy that works to improve people's experience of the outdoors. It works across a variety of settings: public spaces, parks, social and mixed tenure housing, schools and children's centres.



## Acknowledgements

Instrumental in enabling this work to happen have been David Craig, Education Officer and Sandra Mousdale, Play Services Manager of North Lanarkshire Council's (NLC's) Learning and Leisure Services.

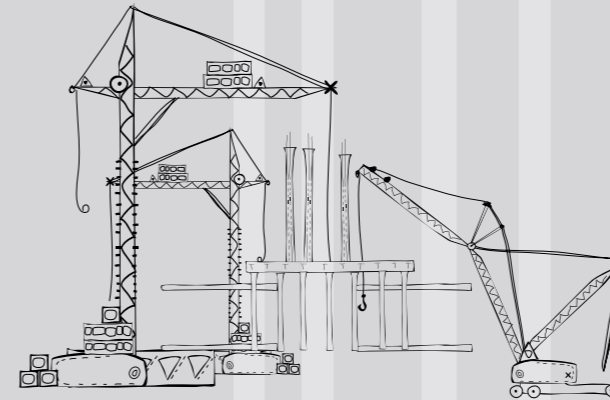
Instrumental in the actual implementation of the work have been the head teachers, staff and children of Banton Primary School (PS), Knowetop PS and Thornlie PS to whom we give heartfelt thanks. We greatly appreciate their commitment and enthusiasm in the face of so many competing demands.

NLC's Land Services have been extremely supportive and helpful in the practical help they have given and their willingness to change existing approaches to grounds maintenance in schools – an important example for other local authorities.

Thank you to the staff of NLC's Learning Centre for their patience, commitment and professionalism in the production of both the video and this report.

Thanks to Robert Wiseman Dairies for their generous contribution of milk crates.

*This place is like a building site!*



North Lanarkshire Council  
**Learning and Leisure Services**  
Municipal Buildings, Kildonan Street,  
Coatbridge ML5 3BT

t: 01236 812222

f: 01698 403 025

e: [lls.enquiries@northlan.gov.uk](mailto:lls.enquiries@northlan.gov.uk)