

# Highland Council Play Development

## 'How to Upgrade your Outdoor Area'

A Highland Primary/Pre-school Perspective



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## **Rosebank Primary/Pre-school Playground Upgrade**

This guide offers schools and pre-schools wishing to upgrade their grounds an idea of the process they need to go through. One Highland school has detailed the process from their perspective. In addition, general design considerations, ideal inclusions, specific playground features, fundraising agencies and support agencies have also been included.

### **SUMMARY**

In 2004, staff at Rosebank Primary decided to upgrade their grounds in order to promote child-centred play opportunities and extra curricular activities in addition to providing a learning tool for cross curriculum activities. It was hoped that the development would also improve the general ethos of the school and pre-school whilst encouraging citizenship and links with cluster schools and the wider community.

Rosebank Primary is a large co-educational school situated in Nairn with a school role of 482. This includes pupils from nursery to primary seven and a support base for pupils on the autistic spectrum.

The school building is set in extensive grounds, separated into two main areas. The playground at the front of the school is utilised by senior pupils and the rear by the infants and pre-schoolers.

### **THE MANAGEMENT**

The upgrade project was managed by the Rosebank Recreational Revival Group (The 3 R's) under the umbrella of the P.T.A. It consisted of representative parents, staff and interested parties from the wider community. Pupils were also involved in the planning and development process in an effort to offer a sense of ownership.

### **COMMUNITY LINKS**

The project encouraged links with the wider community by organising joint fundraising ventures, inviting other pre-schools to use the garden and offering work experience to senior pupils at Nairn Academy.

## **AREAS DEVELOPED**

After significant discussion and planning the following areas were developed:

- **Sensory Garden**  
Fragrant plants, flowers, mobiles and wind-chimes to enhance the sensory experience of all youngsters including those with additional support needs.
- **Wildlife Area**  
To increase knowledge of local wildlife and nature.
- **Recycling Area**  
To raise awareness of the environmental **3 R's - Reduce, Reuse & Recycle**.
- **Rain Water Collector**  
To use on the plants & flowers rather than using tap water.
- **Rockery**  
Incorporating raised flowerbeds to allow inclusive gardening activities.
- **Seated Area**  
For relaxation and quiet outdoor play.
- **Pergola and Willow Tunnel**  
For pupils to gather under and crawl through.
- **Orchard & Vegetable Gardens**  
For children to experience growing & even eating fruit & vegetables grown by themselves.
- **Wormery**  
For the children to observe and also to improve the quality of topsoil available for the garden areas.
- **Plastic Bottle Green House**  
An inexpensive green house made from disused plastic bottles to grow plants & flowers in.
- **Bog Garden**  
For children to observe the different plants & flowers that grow in such an environment.
- **Maze**
- **Bird & Bat Boxes**

## **PLAY AREAS**

Inclusive, physically stimulating and challenging play areas were developed for pupils of all ages and abilities to improve general fitness & team building skills incorporating the following:

- **Play equipment**  
Low level equipment was designed to improve balance & co-ordination.
- **Ground and wall games**  
Permanent educational games were painted on the ground and walls.
- **Traverse Climbing wall**  
A climbing wall was built against a perimeter wall for the pupils to climb on. The foot holds are not particularly high off the ground but considerable skill is required to maneuver along the various routes.
- **Tractor and car tyres**  
Old tyres were used to encourage free play as the kids can move them around, a characteristic children love in play equipment.
- **Play Boat**  
An old sailing boat was renovated and painted to encourage imaginative role play.
- **Blackboards**  
Blackboards were mounted on walls for the children to write and draw on and for teachers to use to deliver the curriculum.
- **Basketball and Football areas**  
Existing areas were made bigger to cater for a higher number of children.
- **Seating around existing trees**  
Seats were made around trees in the playground for relaxation and story telling etc.
- **Existing perimeter fencing renewed**  
Existing fencing around the school was renewed to stop balls entering gardens.
- **Ball chute**  
A piece of equipment that you aim a ball into and from which the ball can exit in several directions.

## **ART PROJECTS**

A variety of creative ventures were developed to brighten and enhance the playground whilst improving opportunities to experience art in education. The following projects were achieved in partnership with the Scottish Arts Council and the local Highland Council, Arts Development Officer:

- **Murals**  
On fencing & canteen walls
- **Child friendly sign posting**  
Directions to office, nursery and warnings
- **Road Safety**  
Road markings & road signs for cycling proficiency program
- **Blackboards**

## **ACTION PLAN**

### **Phase 1 (Oct 2004 - March 2005)**

- Develop committee
- Develop project plan
- Develop fundraising plan
- Raise awareness of project in the community
- Install blackboards in infant playground
- Begin garden area - develop calendar
- Develop notice board & suggestion box for pupil ideas

### **Phase 2 (April - June 2005)**

- On-going fundraising & publicity
- Apply to major funders
- Liaise with staff
- Parents skills audit
- Complete garden area
- Install first ground games
- Plan bank at rear of school
- Target specific funding for ball chute/climbing walls
- Consider art project

### Phase 3 (August - Dec 2005)

- On-going fundraising & publicity
- Further applications to major funders
- Plan & develop football & basketball areas
- Seasonal garden developed
- Plan & develop low play area
- Start Art project

### Phase 4 (Jan - April 2006)

- On-going fundraising & publicity
- Further applications to funders
- Plan & develop road safety projects
- Consider general improvements agenda

### Phase 5 (May - July 2006)

- On-going fundraising & publicity
- Further applications to funders
- Plan & develop signs project
- Plan & develop wall games
- Develop structures to ensure sustainability

## **MATERIALS & EQUIPMENT COSTS**

### Garden

Greenhouse materials	230.00
Sensory Garden	35.00
Fruit & Veg Garden	40.00
Wildlife Garden	35.00
Recycling Facilities	20.00
Plants, trees & shrubs	400.00
Seating area	150.00
Water Butts	80.00
Misc	300.00
	<b><u>£1,290.00</u></b>

### Play Areas

Low Play equipment	900.00
Basketball area	400.00
Football Area	2000.00
Blackboards	300.00
Ball Chutes	2500.00
Climbing Wall	2000.00
Permanent playground games	500.00
Ground surfaces	1400.00
Ongoing maintenance & inspection of play equipment	600
	<b><u>£10,600.00</u></b>

### **Art Projects**

Paint & Materials	500.00
Craft Residency	12,000.00
	<b><u>£12,500.00</u></b>

### **General Improvements**

Seating	200.00
Bank at rear of school	500.00
Fencing	<u>1000.00</u>
	<b><u>£1,700.00</u></b>

Total cost of project was **£26,090.00**

### **SUPPORT AGENCIES USED:**

The Scottish Arts Council - Craft residency  
Woolworths Community Fund  
Scottish National Heritage  
Action Earth  
School sponsored event - Schools Football Initiative  
Lucky Squares  
Dress as you please days  
Various school initiatives  
Charity bands  
Tesco Community Vouchers  
Parent Teacher Association (PTA)  
Rotary Club  
Round Table  
Woolworths  
Schools Football Initiative  
Trust Funds  
Nairn Ceilidh Group  
Highland Childcare Partnership  
Community Safety Partnership  
Partnership for Rural Inverness & Nairn (PRIN)  
Farmer Show Parking

TOTAL: **£13,945.30**

## **GENERAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS:**

When they can, children consistently choose natural environments for their play - grassy slopes, trees, shrubs, shaded areas, rock pools, sand, water, places for climbing & construction and challenging places for exploring. Frequently we can design a play area which incorporates many of these features more cheaply than we can construct a play area consisting of coloured, metal, play equipment on flat rubber surfacing.

The best play areas are designed, with as much thought to space and landscape as to play equipment. Try not to make it just a matter of choosing play equipment from a catalogue.

Try not to let equipment dominate a small space. The space itself and landscaping are more important than the equipment choice.

The fear of litigation has too often led planners and officials to feel they have to design and build play areas primarily to guard against any injury. Sometimes equipment has been 'dumbed-down' to such a degree that children find it boring and seek their excitement elsewhere. Worse still, they may not seek challenge anywhere else and we are then in danger of producing 'cotton wool kids' who are timid, judge risks poorly and consequently underachieve in later life. Children both need and want to take risks in order to explore limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capacities.

The proper approach to British or European safety standards is not to regard them as laying down a compulsory standard but to view them as representing good practice. Their limitations should be recognised: mere compliance will not automatically create a safe playground. By using a rational process of risk assessment, together with a balance of cost, risk and benefit, departure from the standards in some instances may be possible without a failure to exercise reasonable care.

Some 30% - 50% of a conventional playground's budget is spent on safety surfacing and fencing. This percentage of overall spend may not be the best use of funding e.g. grass in good condition is allowed for falls of up to 1m. Where a safety surface is considered appropriate, it may be more expensive in the long run to put down and replace sand or bark than it is to lay wet pour or rubber tiles. However in the main grass, bark, sand and pea shell gravel are all considered to have a higher play value. In consideration of future maintenance commitments, there are advantages and disadvantages to the different types of safety surfacing and careful choices should be made when we consider the potential for children's positive play experience.

**For examples of good and bad play areas check:**

<http://www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/playlink/exhibition/woepossibility/index.html>

## IDEAL INCLUSIONS

First and foremost try to ensure that your outdoor area upgrade suits the surrounding environment and has a sense of originality and imagination.

Try to offer opportunities for children to: engage with their natural surroundings, be sociable and solitary, create imaginary worlds, test boundaries, construct and alter their surroundings, experience change and continuity and take acceptable levels of risk.

As far as possible the landscape & vegetation should be used as the play setting & natural features as play items. Examples include: a grassy mound, large tree, shrubs for hide and seek, wild flower area, hedging, boulders/rocks, small gullies/ditches, tall grass, streams and wooded areas.

Try to incorporate challenge into the play experiences in your play area. It's a matter of balancing severity of injury with likelihood of it happening. Removing all risk from a play area makes it boring for the kids and close to useless in developmental terms.

Try to use a variety of surfaces and gradients -as these can help to facilitate the creation of different play zones.

Try to opt for wooden equipment rather than metal as children prefer its feel and it tends to suit Highland environments better.

Aim to include equipment with as high a play value as possible. Rather than opting just for the swings, chute or springy, look for items which allow kids to engage in a high number of varied play actions. There are manufacturers making units which incorporate climbing, sliding, swinging, jumping, crawling & balancing.

Consider disabled access. Children with additional support needs most often like to play alongside able bodied peers. Try to make the site as inclusive as possible by considering wheelchair access with wider ramps, chutes, ladders and platforms on all play items.

For quality physical play, ensure you have provision to jump on, over and through and things to climb & balance on.

A wide range of sensory stimulation is ideal with a range of textures, shapes, smells, colours & sounds.

Places to hide & be quiet are just as important as areas for energetic physical play.

Equipment for sand & water play is very popular with children.

Try to design in flexibly which allows kids to alter the space. Equipment and materials that can be altered and moved can be used more imaginatively by children and give them a sense of ownership of their play experience.

Consultation with children is vital as they will then have a sense of ownership of the play area and vandalism is likely to be less of a problem as a result. However, try to give children a wide choice to choose from and consider taking them to other good play areas so they can test new landscapes, features and play equipment for themselves.

Existing trees should be maintained if possible - careful placing of trees, shrubs, benches, shelters & other design features such as art installations create various zones. Trees can be chosen for their colour, scent & ability to form potential play areas such as corridors & willow dens.

## **PLAYGROUND FEATURES-ADVICE**

Below are primary schools that have developed particular playground features you may also want to develop.

<b>Playground Markings</b>	Central Primary:	Mrs Binks	01463 233906
<b>Climbing Wall</b>	Rosebank:	Mr Brander	01667 454090
<b>Play Equipment</b>	Badcaul:	Mrs Taylor	01854 633265
	Achiltibuie:	Mr Fraser	01854 622267
	Strathpeffer:	Mrs Ritchie	01997 421824
<b>Improving Tarmac</b>	Central:	Mrs Binks	01463 233906
<b>Gardening/Food Growing</b>	Raigmore:	Mrs Leslie	01463 234971
	Grantown:	Miss Robertson	01479 872525
	Stratherrick:	Ms MacKinnon	01456 486630
<b>Mosaics</b>	Bishop Eden:	Mrs MacKay	01463 237103
<b>Murals and tiles</b>	Millbank:	Mrs MacKay	01667 452240

## **FUNDRAISING AGENCIES**

**Agencies that offer funding and/or advice to upgrade outdoor areas:**

- Grounds for Learning  
<http://www.gflscotland.org.uk>
- Awards for All  
<http://www.awardsforall.org.uk/scotland/index.html>
- The Scottish Arts Council  
<http://www.scottisharts.org.uk/1/funding.aspx>
- Royal Bank of Scotland - 'Supergrounds'  
[http://www.rbs.com/corporate03.asp?id=CORPORATE\\_RESPONSIBILITY/COMMUNITY\\_INVESTMENT/HELP\\_YOU](http://www.rbs.com/corporate03.asp?id=CORPORATE_RESPONSIBILITY/COMMUNITY_INVESTMENT/HELP_YOU)
- BBC Children in Need ( for disadvantaged children)  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/pudsey>
- Foundation for Sport and the Arts (for schools not pre-schools)  
<http://www.thefsa.net>

You might also find <http://www.funderfinder.org.uk/> helpful. Your local CVS will also have reference library on funding.

## **GENERAL SUPPORT AGENCIES**

### **Resource Boxes for Upgrading Grounds**

The Highland Council has resource boxes of books, leaflets & cds for upgrading grounds which can be borrowed by schools and pre-schools. If you would like to borrow a resource box for a term please contact:

Play Development Officer: [malina.macdonald@highland.gov.uk](mailto:malina.macdonald@highland.gov.uk) 01463 711176

### **Grounds for Learning**

GfL is the national charity which supports school grounds development in Scotland. It is a membership organisation offering a wide range of resource materials, practical advice, resource boxes, training courses and funding initiatives. Their website is well worth a look.

Email: [gflscotland@stir.ac.uk](mailto:gflscotland@stir.ac.uk)

Tel no: 01786 445922

Web site: <http://www.gflscotland.org.uk>

### **Highland Council Countryside Rangers**

Highland Council rangers provide an excellent, free service to all schools in the area. They can advise on many aspects of grounds development and help with a wide range of classroom activities and practical projects to bring your grounds into the curriculum and to further improve them for wildlife.

Email: [george.duff@highland.gov.uk](mailto:george.duff@highland.gov.uk)

Tel no: 01463 702279

Web site: [www.highland.gov.uk](http://www.highland.gov.uk) and look under "R" for rangers

### **Waste Management & Composting**

As well as advising your school/pre-school on waste minimization and recycling projects in general, staff on the waste team can help you set up an effective compost system to help dispose of green waste and provide compost for all those planned garden projects.

Web site: [www.highland.gov.uk](http://www.highland.gov.uk)

Tel no: 01349 868 439

E-mail: [imogen.percy-bell@highland.gov.uk](mailto:imogen.percy-bell@highland.gov.uk) - waste management info

[marina.fraser@wrap.org.uk](mailto:marina.fraser@wrap.org.uk) - composting info

### **Highland Council Health and Safety Team**

The Team can offer advice to schools on the European and British standards that apply with respect to the purchase, installation and maintenance of playground equipment and safety surfacing. Where necessary, the team can visit and provide site specific advice on standards, installation and maintenance requirements.

Web site: <http://www.highland.gov.uk>

Tel no: 01463 703099

E-mail: [andrew.mactaggart@highland.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.mactaggart@highland.gov.uk)

### **Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)**

RoSPA provides advice on outdoor play and has useful information sheets on its website regarding children's play and appropriate playground equipment standards (i.e. play safety link on their website).

Web site: [http://www.rospa.co.uk/playsafety/services/play\\_area.htm](http://www.rospa.co.uk/playsafety/services/play_area.htm)

Tel no: 01367 244600

E-mail: [info@rospaplaysafety.co.uk](mailto:info@rospaplaysafety.co.uk)

### **BTCV - British Trust Conservation Volunteers**

BTCV staff and volunteers can help you plan your grounds improvements and also assist with some of the harder landscaping elements you may be planning. They can bring a team, tools and a lot of practical expertise. There is a charge for their help but they can also advise you on fundraising.

Email: [j.sleeman@btcv.org.uk](mailto:j.sleeman@btcv.org.uk)

Tel: 01463 811560

Web site: <http://www.btcv.org>

### **HEN - Highland Environmental Network**

HEN organises an annual networking conference on topics such as upgrading grounds, renewable energy and environmental arts.

c/o Glachbeg Croft Education centre, by North Kessock IV1 3XD

Web site: <http://www.highlandenvironment.org.uk>

Email: [admin@highlandenvironment.org.uk](mailto:admin@highlandenvironment.org.uk)

### **'Plot to Pot' Food Growing in Schools Project**

Toni Clark, Plot to Pot Project Co-ordinator, Highland Environmental Network

Tel no: 01463 731066

Email: [tonic\\_mary@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:tonic_mary@yahoo.co.uk)

Web site: <http://www.highlandenvironment.org.uk>

### **CSV Action4Sustainability**

Contact Elanor Gordon for a wide range of support services on all aspects of grounds development. Elanor can advise on planning and funding as well as deliver workshops relevant to your project. She has a wide range of resource materials to loan and can point you in the direction of other organisations who can help. If you are also considering an Eco-school award, she can show you exactly how your school ground improvements can help you achieve it. This service is free to all Highland schools.

Email: [elanor.gordon@highland.gov.uk](mailto:elanor.gordon@highland.gov.uk)

Tel no: 07768 032669 / 01349 868255

Web site: <http://www.csv.org.uk/scotland>

Web site: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/17108/20494>

### **Aigas Field Centre**

As well as offering a range of exciting on-site activities at their Field Centre near Beauly, Aigas staff are available in the winter months to visit your school/pre-school to advise on the biodiversity aspects of grounds improvements.

They can help you make the most of what you already have in your grounds and advise on improvements which can encourage more wildlife. This service is free but for a limited number of schools from November - March.

Email: [info@aigas.co.uk](mailto:info@aigas.co.uk)

Tel: 01463 782443 - Melanie Lister-Kaye

Web site: <http://www.aigas.co.uk>

### **Artsplay Highland**

Artsplay can help you with all aspects of planning an art project from the initial idea through to its completion. They can provide contact details for disclosed professional artists and information and ideas on a wide range of arts projects including: Murals - all media, Outdoor instruments, Sculptures - wood / clay metal / willow, Performances or exhibitions, Painting, Ceramics/Stained Glass Film / photo / digital imagery, Story/Words/Poems.

Email: [jelica@artsplayhighland.org.uk](mailto:jelica@artsplayhighland.org.uk)

Tel: 01456 450264

Web site: <http://www.hi-arts.co.uk/artsplay.htm>

### **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds**

The RSPB has a new resource in the form of a part-time field teacher Jess Tomes. Jess can assist schools/pre-schools - free of charge - in many of the aspects of improving conditions for birds and wildlife in the playground with advice, practical sessions with children and wildlife investigations. She can also help take pupils through the new Wildlife Action Award scheme.

Email: [jess.tomes@rspb.co.uk](mailto:jess.tomes@rspb.co.uk)

Tel no: 01463 715000

Website: <http://www.rspb.org.uk>

### **Scottish Natural Heritage**

Scottish Natural Heritage have local offices throughout Highland and provide grants for ground improvement projects which benefit the natural heritage or improve our understanding of it.

Web site: <http://www.snh.org.uk/ww0/education/educ-grant.asp>

Email: [enquiries@snh.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@snh.gov.uk)

Tel no: West Highland 01397 704716

North Highland 01408 633602

East Highland 01349 865333

### **Happyness Drum Circles**

As well as providing a range of excellent percussion workshops, Steve Sharpe can help you and your pupils construct your very own wooden instruments as beautiful and playful features of your school grounds. There is a charge for this service; Steve is happy to talk to schools/pre-schools throughout Highland to help tailor a project to your needs.

Tel no: 01808 521335

Web site: [www.happyness.org](http://www.happyness.org)

### **John McNaught - Art Projects**

John is employed part time by the council in Ross & Cromarty and has helped many schools carry out excellent school ground arts projects - he is currently heavily booked up but may be able to spend up to a day on an advisory visit to a school/pre-school in Ross & Cromarty - or with some persuasion to a school/pre-school in another area (where he may get involved with freelance work).

Tel no: 01381 600337

Email: [gijo@ecosse.net](mailto:gijo@ecosse.net)

**Moray Wastebusters**

Waterford Recycling Centre, Nr Forres IV36 3TN

Tel no: 01309 676056

Email: [wastebusters@onetel.net.uk](mailto:wastebusters@onetel.net.uk)

**Willow Weaving**

Les Bates - Croft 7, Knockbain, Kirkhill, Inverness IV5 7PL

Tel no: 01463 831320

Email: [CROFT7@aol.com](mailto:CROFT7@aol.com)