Transcript: Grounds for Learning - Construction

Narrator: To the untrained eye, these materials might look like a pile of junk but in the hands of imaginative children, these simple resources are for endless possibilities from spaceships to Viking forts, from stormy seas to enchanted gardens.

Helen Downey, Playground Supervisor: We’ve had tanks, we’ve had castles, we’ve had ships, we’ve had desert islands.  Primary 7’s once, they made out they were in the rain forest.

David Hughes, Headteacher, Thornlie Primary School: When we first got some loose materials out, for instance, children soon were building squares, building wee dens against the wall with their sticks, they had a million and one uses. When we got the coins out, I saw more mathematics in the playground with no guidance whatsoever, measure and estimate and what goes together and matching of shapes, we saw more of that, and my teachers saw more of that, in ten minutes than we could have done in the class from textbooks and anything to do with volume or weight or measure.

Carol Perkins, Playground Supervisor: They just love it, they just love using their imaginations to build all different things and you never know what’s going to appear next, it’s amazing what they can do.

Narrator: Children have to work together in teams to lift materials to their building site, they develop skills of balancing and rolling while learning about the properties of natural materials, problem solving, social interaction, rule making, team work, decision making, creativity and imagination occur naturally as children work together. Many situations will naturally require conflict resolution, resilience and experimentation, all skills children require to learn for their life.

Helen Downey: You see a difference because they all work together and it’s like teamwork and they’ll come up with ideas and they’ll help each other out and ‘we’ll do it this way, no, how about doing it that way?’ And then they’ll, like I say, problem-solving and they love it.   
Carol Perkins:  They form their wee sort of groups and there’s always, there’s never anybody left out, they always manage to get in to do, if they don’t want to do a particular thing they’ll find their way into another wee group making something else or playing a different game.   
Narrator: These loose materials are used by children in a diverse number of ways from pretend pizzas, steering wheels to constructing dens and assault courses. Staff can use the resources to link to curricular areas, storytelling, science, maths, children are taught how to manage these resources effectively and safely.

Marion Brown, Playground Supervisor: We’ve got a tidy up bell, it goes five minutes before playtime finishes and they are really good at tidying up, so they just follow by example, if we show them what to do they will go and do it and generally we just say ‘tidy up’ and then they all go and tidy up, they’re really good at tidying up.

Narrator: Simple rules like a five minute tidy up bell make managing natural play easier, and teach children to be responsible citizens. If money is a concern, you can source suitable materials by asking parents and local businesses to donate suitable items like milk crates and boxes, this helps to broaden the school community and increases buy-in from parents.