

Recycled signal cables help create fantastic new playground for primary school children in South East London

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Children at a South East London nursery and primary school are enjoying safe and fun playtimes thanks to a pioneering project by Network Rail and supplier Seva Rail, from Ashford in Kent.

Grinling Gibbons school looks after 225 pupils from reception through to year 6 and now has a colourful play area for their younger children, made from recycled cables cut up and replaced as part of a resignalling of the railway in the area.

Network Rail and Seva staff helped create a new playground with trampoline, climbing frame and more, and the major improvement of a rubber-floored play area in the front of the school.

Dean Gordon, Head of School, said, "I've been here six years and we've never had this experience before, it means so much. People walk past and see the playground and come in to sign their children up for nursery. Children start their journeys playing in the nursery and they play and learn together, and their communication is developed and improved. We were lucky to get the support from Network Rail and Seva

as we couldn't have afforded to do this without them."

"The children love it, teachers love it, I love it and parents love it. We're so fortunate to have this."

Gregg Smith, managing director of Seva Rail, said: "The way the railway used to work the waste from a job, be it cabling or anything else, was carried away by a national supplier and it was someone else's problem. We thought there must be a better way so we commissioned a professional study of the area to show us where anything we could do would have the biggest social value. The survey showed that for every pound we invested in this school we would get £1.70 of value.

"We said we could reuse the rubber from the cables and sell the copper element to fund it. So, we designed and commissioned the kit to break the rubber down, granulate it and create this covering, and we watched the market and sold the copper for a good price. One of our services is cable recovery so if we can roll this out everywhere we work, we can provide a cost-neutral way of helping the local community."

Darren Colderwood, Network Rail's capital delivery director, said: "We've not only given something back to the community, which is fantastic, but we've also shown that we can reduce our carbon footprint by reusing waste in a positive way. We've shown we can be sustainable and help people too, which is a really powerful thing. What I would like to see is this becoming a catalyst for more, as we and Seva have shown it can be done."

From Grinling Gibbons school, 5-year-old Fatima said she loved the playground!

Network Rail's Angerstein resignalling saw the replacement of all signal equipment, which controls the safe movement of trains, in the Greenwich, Charlton and Blackheath areas. Traditional signalling uses a lot of double-shielded copper cables, which provided the basis for the school's new playground.

Grinling Gibbons school, named after a famous sculptor and wood carver of the 1600s who lived in Deptford, is part of the Phoenix Foundation with Lucas Vale primary school in St John's.

Photo credit: Network Rail