

BEST PRACTICE ADVICE FOR GETTING OUTDOOR LEARNING RIGHT



Benefits of outdoor learning and play have long been reported by the government, education staff and parents.

But according to the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, there's been a cultural shift in our society in recent years, which has seen a decline in how much time many young children spend outside. Interestingly, recent research has revealed that 75% of UK children spend less time outdoors than prison inmates (Persil).

However, the benefits of playing and learning in stimulating outdoor environments for children (particularly younger children) are still widely recognised, with the Early Years Foundation Stage

(particularly younger children) are still widely recognised, with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum placing strong emphasis on the importance and value of daily outdoor experiences for children's overall wellbeing, learning and development.

Over the years, we've seen an increase in the number of nurseries and schools using outdoor canopies to offer learning outside the classroom. While there's no right or wrong way to create outdoor learning environments, it's always useful to learn from other people's experiences. This cheat sheet is designed to help you do just that.

DO: CHOOSE YOUR SPACE WISELY

Yes, it's an obvious, but really crucial point. As with most installations, you need to think really carefully about the location of your outdoor learning environment. Is it going to be tucked away in an underused corner somewhere or be in a busier spot? How is the location going to impact pupils' learning?

Outdoor canopies don't have to be attached to other buildings, they can be freestanding and positioned further away from the main learning space. That way, you can make the most of other areas of interest within your grounds. Near allotment spaces, ponds and outdoor science areas are always popular options.



DON'T BE AFRAID TO TRY : SOMETHING NEW

While it's always useful to shop around and see what others have done, don't fall into the trap of simply following in their footsteps (unless what they've done is exactly what you're after!)

Your outdoor canopy supplier should be able to advise you on the different options that are available to you, don't just settle for the bare minimum. The more creative you are with your installation, the more engaging it's going to be for your pupils and likely it is to tick all of your boxes. For instance, did you know that you can create canopies without any supporting posts (to help reduce the risk of accidents) and they're available in any colour?.

DO: THINK ABOUT : THE WEATHER

One of the biggest things that's going to impact your outdoor learning environment, is the weather. Lots of our schools want to still be able to teach outside, regardless of whether it's windy, rainy or sunny.

Make sure you bear this in mind when you're designing your canopy installation. Is your outdoor learning area positioned to provide the best shelter from the elements? What features can be incorporated to make sure you create an all-year round learning haven? Don't be afraid to ask your canopy provider these types of questions – it's important that your outdoor learning environment is 100% right.

DON'T LIMIT : YOURSELF

As well as providing your pupils with the chance to learn outside and get some fresh air in their lungs, outdoor classrooms are more than just that. But you'd be surprised at just how many nurseries and schools view them that way.

Outdoor classrooms can easily double up to create sheltered outdoor play areas where children can burn off some of their energy and play to their heart's content, regardless of what the weather's up to. Move over indoor wet play breaks, these days, it's all about sheltered outdoor wet play!

We hope you've found this advice useful. If you have any questions or would like to discuss how we could help you create an outdoor learning and/play environment, contact us on 01254 777 002 or karen@canopiesuk.co.uk