

ACADEMY GROUNDS AND LEARNING



Helping academies make the most of their outdoor areas, whatever the weather.



HIGHLIGHTS:

P. 2

Useful dates for your diary

P. 4

Case Study: EYFS Outdoor Learning Shelter at an academy in Dorset

P. 7

7 Spooktacular Outdoor Halloween Activities

P. 10

Why Canopy Materials Matter: Canopy Fire Ratings

"Absolutely outstanding from start to finish. The contractors working on site were very polite and professional in their job. Would recommend you and this contractor to anyone."

Purple Oaks Academy,
Northamptonshire

Brought to you by Able Canopies

www.ablecanopies.co.uk

sales@ablecanopies.co.uk

0800 389 9072



EDITOR'S WELCOME

Hello and welcome to the second edition of *Academy Grounds and Learning*; our bi-annual newsletter designed specifically for UK academies.

Within this newsletter, you will find a selection of articles to give you inspiration for transforming your outdoor areas along with ideas you can incorporate into your outdoor lessons and outdoor play, and fundraising

ideas to help you fund your outdoor projects.

So take a break, sit back, relax with a cuppa and have a read. Hopefully you'll be able to take some ideas back to the classroom.

If you enjoy reading, we'd love for you to leave a copy in your staffroom for your colleagues to enjoy too. If they would like to receive their own copies, head to

www.ablecanopies.co.uk/newsletter and we'll add them to the list.

I hope you find lot's of inspiration for the rest of autumn, and going into winter, we'll be back in the spring for more.

Best Wishes

Christine Vaughan-Chatfield
Editor

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Here's some dates that you can weave into your curriculum to add a little pizzazz into lessons over the next 3 months:

November 3rd - National Sandwich Day

November 13th - World Kindness Day

December 21st - Winter Solstice

ACADEMIES LOVE THE TARNHOW TIMBER CANOPIES

Here's Why:



Excellent Solar
Gain Properties



Galvanised Steel
Feet for Protection
Against Rot



Available in a
Choice of 10 Stains



Excellent Fire
Rating



Blocks Over 98%
of UV Rays



Unlimited
Lengths & up to
16m Projections



Wall Mounted &
Free Standing
Options



Vandal & Shatter
Resistant
Roof Panels



For Complete
Peace of Mind



Including Mono-Pitch
& Curved Glulam®
Timber

To explore the Tarnhow canopies further, scan the QR code below or visit:
www.ablecanopies.co.uk/timber



CASE STUDY

Kings Park Academy EYFS Outdoor Learning Shelter

How Kings Park Academy created an all-weather EYFS outdoor learning, play and waiting area

Brief

Kings Park Academy, a primary school in Bournemouth, Dorset, wanted to improve the outdoor learning area serving three reception classrooms. The existing space was partially covered by two cantilever umbrellas, which offered limited weather protection.

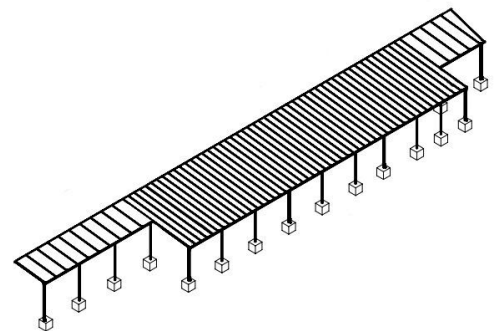
The academy required a larger, permanent canopy to enable year-round outdoor learning and play. However, the irregular shape of the approximately 41-metre-long area meant that a standard rectangular canopy would not maximise the available space.

The Proposal

Following a site survey and discussions with the academy, Able Canopies recommended a bespoke configuration of the Coniston Walkway Canopy.

The proposed design comprised three connected sections measuring 10m x 3m, 25m x 6m and 4.6m x 3.5m, creating one continuous structure with varying projections to follow the existing fence line.

The project also included removing the existing umbrellas and making the necessary drainage amendments.



The Solution

In August 2026, Able Canopies successfully installed the bespoke Coniston Walkway Canopy, creating approximately 202m² of covered outdoor space.

The new canopy provides pupils with a spacious, sheltered environment for outdoor learning and play throughout the year, offering protection from rain, sunshine and harmful UV rays.

The covered area also provides a comfortable waiting space for parents and carers during drop-off and collection times. Additionally, by shading the adjoining classrooms, the canopy can help reduce direct solar heat gain during warmer weather.

The completed installation has transformed the academy's EYFS outdoor area into a versatile, all-weather space that supports learning, play and everyday school activities.



YOU'RE INVITED



MEET US AT THE SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES SHOW

WHERE TO FIND US:



**STAND
H13**

Featuring:

- SEND CONFERENCE
- INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS CONFERENCE
- EDTECH SUMMIT

WHEN?

18TH & 19TH

NOVEMBER 2026

WHERE?

NEC, BIRMINGHAM

**SECURE YOUR
FREE TICKETS:**

WWW.SCHOOLSANDACADEMIESSHOW.CO.UK

Book a meeting with us at the show: 0800 389 9072 | sales@ablecanopies.co.uk



7 SPOOKTACULAR OUTDOOR HALLOWEEN ACTIVITIES

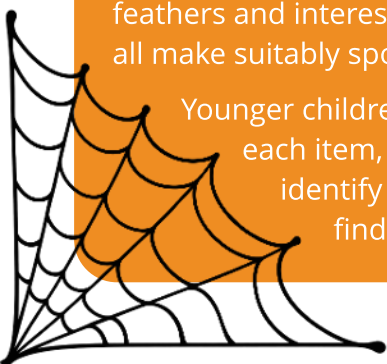
Halloween is a great opportunity to bring a little extra excitement into the school day, and you don't have to keep all the fun inside the classroom with a school canopy. With autumn leaves covering the playground and plenty of seasonal inspiration to discover, October is the perfect time to take learning outdoors.

Here are seven simple Halloween activities that combine learning, creativity and outdoor fun.

1. Go on a Halloween Nature Hunt

Create a checklist of autumn discoveries for pupils to find around the school grounds. Spider webs, orange leaves, conkers, feathers and interestingly shaped twigs can all make suitably spooky additions.

Younger children could simply tick off each item, while older pupils could identify species or record their findings.



2. Investigate a Pumpkin

Pumpkins offer plenty of opportunities for practical learning. Before carving one, ask pupils to estimate its weight, circumference and number of seeds.

You can then measure it, weigh it and count the seeds to see whose estimates were closest. It's a simple way to incorporate maths into a seasonal outdoor activity.



3. Create Spooky Leaf Art

Make use of fallen autumn leaves by transforming them into ghosts, monsters, bats and other Halloween creations.

Pupils can collect leaves of different shapes and colours before using them for collages, printing or seasonal decorations.



4. Try Halloween Outdoor Maths

Take maths into the playground with Halloween-themed challenges. Pupils could measure the distance between hidden pumpkins, create large geometric spider webs with chalk or solve clues positioned around the school grounds.

5. Tell Spooky Stories Outside

An outdoor classroom or sheltered seating area can provide a fantastic setting for Halloween storytelling.

Encourage pupils to create their own age-appropriate spooky tales before sharing them with the class. The sights and sounds of an autumn day can provide plenty of inspiration!



6. Create a Mini Pumpkin Trail

Hide pumpkin pictures, Halloween characters or numbered clues around the school grounds and ask pupils to follow the trail.

Each station could include a question or activity linked to the curriculum, turning a simple Halloween game into an engaging learning experience.



7. Make a Natural Halloween Display

Challenge pupils to create a Halloween display using natural materials they find outside. Fallen leaves, twigs, pinecones and conkers can all become part of imaginative seasonal artwork without needing lots of additional craft materials.

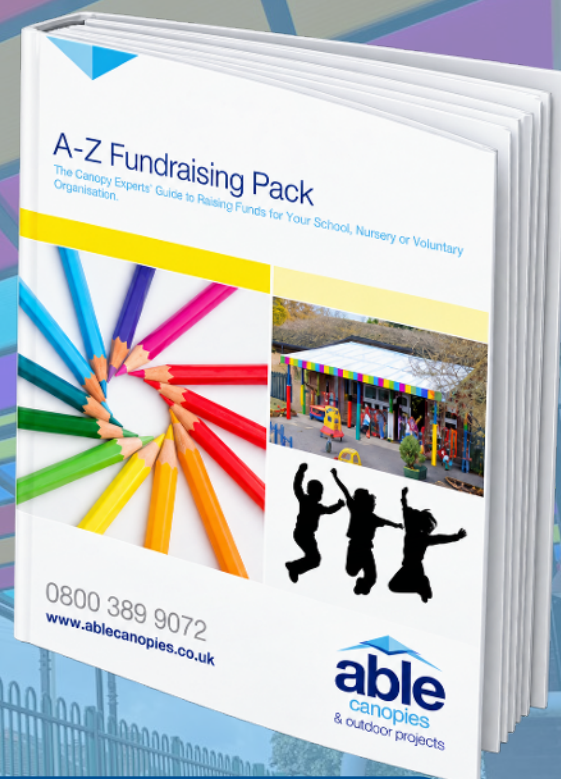
Take Halloween Learning Outside

October weather can be unpredictable, but that doesn't mean outdoor activities need to disappear from the timetable. With suitable clothing and access to sheltered outdoor spaces, pupils can continue learning, exploring and having fun outside throughout autumn.

So, grab the pumpkins, hunt for those spider webs and make the most of your school grounds this Halloween!

IN NEED OF FUNDS FOR YOUR NEXT PROJECT?

Download your free A-Z Fundraising Pack which is filled with fundraising ideas to help you raise £££'s for your next outdoor project.



To download now, scan the QR code or visit:
www.ablecanopies.co.uk/guides

HELPING ACADEMIES FIND FRESH, NEW IDEAS TO RAISE THOSE MUCH NEEDED FUNDS

With over 50 fundraising ideas, plus useful tips, advice and checklists, our free A-Z Fundraising Pack is a must-have for all UK Academies.



Education-focused fundraising



Useful tips and advice



Checklists

WHAT WILL YOU DISCOVER?

- ✓ Over 50 fundraising ideas
- ✓ Top tips for organising an event
- ✓ Licensing advice
- ✓ Fundraising checklist
- ✓ And more...

DOWNLOAD YOUR FREE COPY NOW:

Scan the
QR code to
the right.



Why Canopy Materials Matter: Putting Safety and Quality First

Why it's important to check the fire ratings when investing in a canopy

A recent fire at an academy in Norfolk, reportedly caused by refracted sunlight from a Perspex canopy, has highlighted the importance of choosing safe, high-quality materials for outdoor structures.

Thankfully, nobody was injured, although three classrooms suffered extensive damage. We would like to reassure our customers that the canopy involved was not supplied or installed by Able Canopies.

While this appears to have been an extremely rare incident, it serves as an important reminder that not all canopy materials offer the same performance.



Perspex vs Polycarbonate: Understanding the Difference

Although Perspex and polycarbonate can look similar, their properties differ considerably.

At Able Canopies, our core permanent canopy ranges use carefully selected commercial-grade materials, including durable, impact-resistant polycarbonate roofing.

Our Tarnhow Timber Canopies, for example, feature polycarbonate roof panels supported by strong Glulam timber beams. Both materials have excellent recognised reaction to fire classifications:

Polycarbonate – B-s2,d0: Very limited contribution to fire, moderate smoke production and no flaming droplets.

Glulam Timber – D-s2,d0: Medium contribution to fire, moderate smoke production and no flaming droplets.

These classifications help customers understand how the materials perform when exposed to fire and make informed purchasing decisions.

Why the Cheapest Option Isn't Always the Best

When budgets are tight, choosing the lowest-priced canopy can be tempting. However, cheaper materials may result in increased maintenance, shorter lifespans and higher replacement costs.

When comparing quotations, consider material quality, structural design, expected lifespan, guarantees and relevant safety standards alongside the initial price.

Check the Specifications Before You Buy

A reputable canopy supplier should openly provide technical specifications, including roofing materials, frame construction, fire classifications and guarantees.

At Able Canopies, we publish detailed product specifications to help customers make informed decisions.

With over 20 years of experience designing, manufacturing and installing commercial canopies across the UK, we understand the importance of investing in structures built to last.

Remember: When choosing a canopy for a school or commercial environment, safety and quality should always come before cost.

To find out more: www.ablecanopies.co.uk



Please note: Fire classifications vary depending on the specific product, thickness and finish. Always refer to the relevant product data sheet.

Able Canopies: The Canopy Experts

Canopies &
Covered
Walkways

Cycle &
Waiting
Shelters

Shade Sails
& Tensile
Structures

Awnings &
Playground
Accessories

External
Works:
Surfacing,
Fencing etc.

Able Canopies are the canopy experts. We provide safe and stylish weather protection that transforms outside spaces.

- Every year we complete hundreds of successful school canopy installations across the UK
- These canopies provide schools with effective shelter & areas for outdoor learning and dining
- We also work with universities and the retail, leisure & hospitality sectors to effectively transform outside space
- Our team of canopy experts work with schools, architects & contractors to ensure on time, on budget, project completion
- To ensure consistent high quality we control the design, manufacture & installation process of our canopies

"Really Happy with everything! Great service and superb installation, Thanks!"

Westgate Hill Primary Academy,
Headteacher

If you would like a canopy, shelter or shade sail quotation, contact us today:

Call: 0800 389 9072 | **Email:** sales@ablecanopies.co.uk