

Play & Learn Outdoors

Fun Ideas to Expand a Safe Learning Environment for Your School

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Don't Miss Out!

Sign up to receive a **FREE** quarterly copy of Play & Learn Outdoors, plus monthly outdoor play, learning and fundraising inspiration in your inbox.

Scan the QR code below:



WELCOME TO THE AUTUMN EDITION OF PLAY & LEARN OUTDOORS

Hello and welcome to the September edition of P&LO.

Welcome back to school, I hope you had a great summer and enjoyed the long, warm days we were blessed with this year.

This month's edition of P&LO is packed full with the latest news, ideas and tips to take back to the classroom this autumn.

If you enjoy reading P&LO, we'd love you to pass a copy onto your colleagues to also enjoy. If they would like to receive their own copies, email us at: marketing@ablecanopies.co.uk and we'll add them to the list.

Enjoy these warmer months and spending time outdoors, and we'll be back in the autumn with more ideas and inspiration.

Best Wishes

Tracy Meakins
Managing Director



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Become Part of the P&LO Facebook Group



It's so helpful to be part of a community of like-minded people who talk about something that interests you and supports your profession. However, being a teacher doesn't leave you with much time to go to regular meets outside of your career and personal life. That's why we have created a Facebook group where you can meet

like-minded teachers and education specialists online to discuss any ideas and tips you have for outdoor play and learning ideas, all from the comfort of your home or staff room.

The idea of this online group is so you can gather and share ideas, discuss what has worked for you enabling you to hold outdoor sessions that work out perfectly for both you and your pupils.

We'll also be sharing weekly posts with lots of outdoor play and learning ideas.

How can you join the group? If you have a Facebook profile, it's really simple, search **Outdoor Play & Learning Ideas for Schools UK** in Facebook, click the join button, answer the questions, hit submit, and you're in!

Alternatively, scan the QR code here:



DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO STAY IN THE SHADE

The Department for Education recently released hot weather and heatwave advice for schools and other education settings. Among the advice, they state, ***“When outdoors, encourage children to stay in the shade as much as possible.”***

Do you have enough shade in your outdoor area to be able to follow this advice? If not, you'll be pleased to discover that we have the perfect solution; the most efficient way to provide shade is to invest in a commercial canopy. Since our canopies are permanent structures, the investment can be used all year round, in all weathers, as they also protect from the rain and snow in the colder months.

Our canopies are covered with polycarbonate that has been treated during the manufacturing process to enable them to provide protection from over 98% of the sun's harmful UV rays. Not only does this help to protect children's skin (alongside the use of sun cream), but it also makes the area under the canopy much cooler.

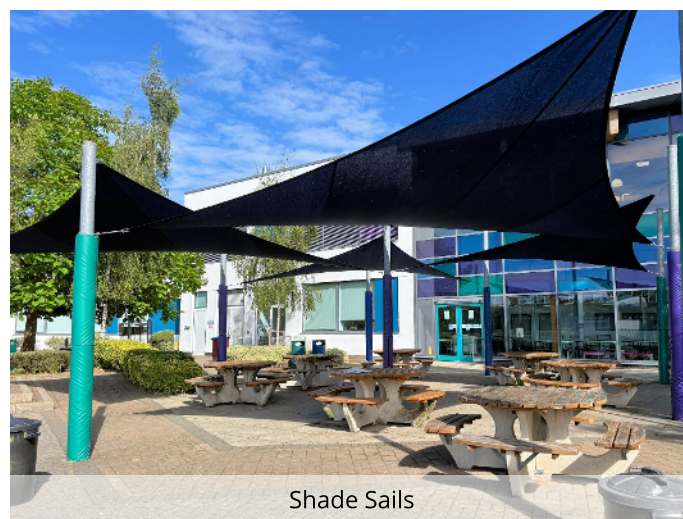
With the UK summers expected to continue warming up over the coming years, there's never been a better time to invest in a canopy and provide that much-needed shade and shelter to help keep your school running on our hottest days.

What Canopies are Best for Sun Protection?

All our canopies provide excellent shade and shelter from the sun; however, here are some of our most popular sun canopies for schools:



The Coniston Canopy



Shade Sails



Tarnhow Dome Freestanding Timber Canopy

Visit www.ablecanopies.co.uk for more information

QUICK AND EASY FUNDRAISING IDEAS

Fundraising plays an important role in helping schools provide new equipment, improve facilities and school canopies and support enrichment activities that benefit pupils throughout the year. While organising a large fundraising event can be rewarding, it isn't always practical when time and budgets are limited. Fortunately, there are plenty of quick and easy fundraising ideas that require very little planning but can still generate impressive results.

If you're looking for inspiration for your next school fundraiser, here are four simple ideas that are fun, affordable and easy for your school community to get involved in.

Run a School 100 Club

A 100 Club is one of the easiest fundraising ideas to organise. Sell 100 numbered tickets for a small fee, then hold a monthly prize draw where a percentage of the income is awarded as prizes and the remaining funds go directly to the school.

It's simple to administer, encourages repeat participation and can become a regular fundraiser throughout the school year.



Football Scratch Cards

For football fans, scratch cards remain a fun and inexpensive way to raise money. Participants pay a small amount to choose a hidden football team, with the winning team revealed once all spaces have been filled.

These work particularly well during major tournaments or the football season and can easily be sold during school events, parents' evenings or at reception



Penny Challenge

The classic penny challenge is still a favourite with primary schools. Ask pupils to fill a recycled drinks bottle with 1p coins over a set period, with support from family members where appropriate.

The challenge encourages children to get involved while teaching the value of saving, and even one full bottle can raise several pounds. Offer a small prize for the first completed bottle or the class that collects the most.



Create a Pop-Up Treat Shop

Food-based fundraisers are always popular. Rather than relying solely on the traditional cake sale, why not set up a weekly or monthly pop-up treat shop after school?

Depending on the season, you could sell ice lollies, fruit pots, hot chocolate, popcorn or themed treats for events such as Halloween, Christmas or Easter. Purchasing products in bulk can help keep costs down while maximising the amount you raise.



Every Little Helps

Successful fundraising doesn't always require months of planning or large events. Sometimes the simplest ideas are the ones that generate the greatest participation. By choosing quick and easy fundraising ideas that are enjoyable and accessible, your school can raise valuable funds while bringing pupils, parents and staff together.

OUR HOTTEST SUMMER YET: ARE YOU PREPARED FOR MORE?



According to the Met Office, last year (2025) *was* officially the UK's warmest summer on record, yet, with us experiencing five heatwaves this summer, they have just announced that 2026 is now officially the warmest on record.

At the start of August, we recorded more days above 30°C than the whole of the infamous 1976. It has also been the first year on record that has reached 35°C in May, June and July, while overnight temperatures have been running at record levels for this stage of the summer.

So, What Does This Mean?

The Met Office states that "As the climate continues to change, the UK is likely to see more frequent and intense heatwaves. A Met Office study highlights how UK heatwaves could become longer and hotter due to escalating climate trends, with an estimated 50-50 chance of seeing 40°C again in the UK in the next 12 years. While individual weather patterns will always vary from year to year, long-term observations continue to show rising temperatures across the UK climate."

I.e. it looks like it's going to keep happening...

How Can You Prepare?

There are a number of ways that you can prepare, including investing in structures that provide permanent shade and shelter in your outdoor area, such as a commercial canopy.

Commercial canopies create shaded areas that are much cooler than the full sun and provide your visitors a place to escape from the intense sun whilst still enjoying time outside on your premises.

Why Invest in a Commercial Canopy? Pop Up Umbrellas are Much Cheaper

Correct, pop up umbrellas are much cheaper; however, there's a reason for that. They only provide minimal shade, they cannot be used in high winds, they need to be taken down out of hours, and they need replacing often, they are also vulnerable to theft and vandalism.

Commercial Canopies, however, can provide large areas of shade – many of our canopies feature unlimited lengths and widths as big as 16 metres, this allows you to cover large waiting areas, outdoor dining areas, entertainment areas and much more.

Because they are permanent structures that have been designed to withstand the UK's weather, there's no need to spend time taking them down at the end of the day and setting them up in the morning, they are always there, providing the shade and shelter you require.

The materials used and designs mean the risk of vandalism is greatly reduced, as they have no moving parts, unlike temporary umbrellas, and because they are permanently fixed in place, there is no risk of theft.

Our polycarbonate roof panels are vandal and shatter resistant and are up to 200 times stronger than glass, making them the perfect choice for covering your new canopy. They also provide high UV protection – up to 98% for many canopies, making the area under your new canopy much safer than a temporary, pop-up umbrella.



WHY CANOPY MATERIALS MATTER: PUTTING SAFETY AND QUALITY FIRST

OUR REVIEW ON THE RECENT FIRE AT A SCHOOL IN NORFOLK



You may have recently seen reports concerning a serious fire at an academy in Norfolk. The accidental fire, which occurred during the summer holidays, caused extensive damage to three classrooms and has understandably raised questions about the safety of outdoor canopies in schools.

Norfolk Fire Service subsequently determined that the fire was caused by refracted sunlight from a Perspex canopy situated within the school's reception outdoor area.

Firstly, and most importantly, we were relieved to hear that nobody was injured during the incident. We would also like to reassure you that the canopy involved was not supplied or installed by Able Canopies.

While incidents such as this can understandably cause concern, it is important to put the event into context. In more than 20 years of supplying and installing commercial canopies across the UK, this is the first time we have heard of a fire involving a canopy

being caused in this way. It therefore appears to be an extremely rare occurrence.

However, it does highlight an important consideration when investing in any permanent outdoor structure: the quality and specification of the materials used matter.

Perspex and Polycarbonate Are Not the Same Material

Transparent plastic roofing materials can sometimes look similar, but their properties and performance can differ considerably.

At Able Canopies, our permanent canopy ranges are manufactured using carefully selected commercial-grade materials. Our timber canopies, for example, use robust polycarbonate roof panels rather than Perspex.

Polycarbonate is widely used within the construction industry because of its combination of strength, durability and impact resistance. The polycarbonate roofing systems specified for our canopies are selected to meet

applicable standards, with detailed product specifications available so customers, architects and contractors can understand exactly what is being supplied.

Our most popular canopies are fitted with 35mm polycarbonate roof sheets which has a **Reaction to Fire Class B-s1,d0 or B-s2,d0**, depending on the sheet chosen, which means:

B – it has a very limited contribution to fire.

s1 - it helps keep escape routes clear and safe from toxic smoke.

s2 – it produces a moderate amount of smoke when exposed to fire.

d0 – it produces no flaming droplets or particles.

These classifications provide customers and specifiers with clear information about how the materials used within our canopy systems perform when exposed to fire, helping them make an informed decision when comparing products and suppliers.

Look Beyond the Initial Price of a Canopy

When budgets are under pressure, particularly within schools and the public sector, choosing the lowest-priced quotation can understandably be tempting. However, a cheaper canopy is not necessarily the most cost-effective option over its lifetime.

The initial purchase price is only one part of the overall investment. Material quality, structural design, expected lifespan, maintenance requirements, guarantees, installation standards and safety should all form part of the purchasing decision.

A structure that is cheaper initially but uses lower-quality materials, has a shorter lifespan or requires more maintenance and replacement work may ultimately cost considerably more in the long term. Not to mention the health and safety risks involved with a product with low-quality materials and poor design.

Most importantly, safety should never be compromised to achieve a lower initial price.

Check the Specification Before You Buy

One of the simplest ways to make a more informed decision when comparing canopy suppliers is to browse their website or brochure and examine the actual product specification.

A reputable commercial canopy supplier should be open about the materials and specifications of its products and give the information away freely.

Before choosing a supplier, we recommend checking whether they clearly publish information such as the roof material, frame material, relevant fire classifications and standards, structural information, expected lifespan and guarantees.

If this information is not readily available on their website or technical literature, ask for it before you consider placing an order.

At Able Canopies, we publish detailed specifications for our canopy systems on our website and make technical product data available to architects, contractors, schools and other customers. This transparency allows customers to understand what they are investing in and enables specifiers to assess whether a product is appropriate for their project.

Choose a Specialist Canopy Supplier

A permanent canopy is a significant structure that may remain in place for decades, particularly in busy environments such as schools, hospitals and commercial premises. It therefore makes sense to purchase from a reputable company that specialises in the design, manufacture and installation of canopy systems.

Able Canopies has been supplying and installing commercial canopies throughout the UK for more than 20 years. Throughout that time, our focus has remained on providing high-quality structures that are designed for their intended environment and manufactured from carefully specified materials.

The recent incident at the Academy in Norfolk appears to have been extremely unusual, and it should not cause schools to be unnecessarily concerned about properly designed and specified canopy systems.

Instead, it serves as an important reminder that not all canopies – and not all roofing materials – are the same.

When comparing canopy quotations, look beyond the price. Check the materials, review the technical specifications, ask about relevant standards and choose an experienced, specialist supplier.

Because when a structure is being installed within an environment used by children, staff and visitors every day, quality and safety should always come first.

**Fire classifications can vary according to the specific polycarbonate product, thickness and finish specified. Please refer to the relevant Able Canopies product data sheet for the classification applicable to your chosen canopy.*

WHAT IS MATCH FUNDING?

If your school, PTA, charity, or community group is fundraising for a project, match funding could help you reach your goal faster.

What is Match Funding?

Match funding is when an employer agrees to match the money raised by their employees for a charity, school, or community organisation.

This means a fundraising event that raises £500 could potentially generate an additional £500 through employer support.

How Does Match Funding Work?

Many larger organisations offer

match funding as part of their community or employee engagement programmes. After completing a fundraising activity, employees can apply to have their employer make a matching donation, subject to the company's terms and conditions.

Who Can Take Part?

It's not just PTA members or volunteers who can help. Parents, school staff, governors, family members, and supporters who work for companies offering match funding may all be eligible to apply.

Why is Match Funding Worth Considering?

Match funding is one of the easiest ways to increase the amount raised from an event without asking supporters to donate more. It can help schools and charities fund projects more quickly while building valuable relationships with local businesses.

Conclusion

If you're planning a fundraising event, it's worth asking supporters whether their employer offers match funding. A simple enquiry could significantly increase the funds raised and help bring your project to life sooner.



ATTENTION: SCHOOL LEADERS AND BUSINESS MANAGERS

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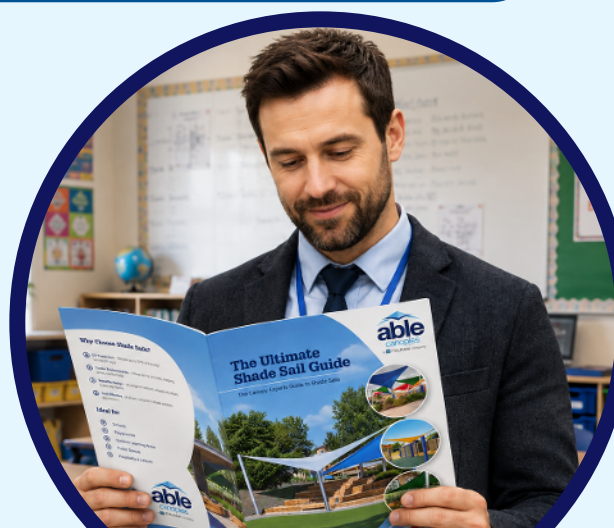
a  PALRAM company



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0800 389 9072

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PREPARE YOUR CANOPY FOR AUTUMN + FREE CANOPY CARE GUIDE

Keep Your Canopy Performing at Its Best

As summer draws to a close and the wetter months begin to approach, now is the ideal time to give your commercial canopy a little attention. A few simple maintenance checks can help keep it looking its best while ensuring it continues to provide reliable protection throughout autumn and winter.

Whether your canopy shelters customers, staff, visitors or valuable outdoor equipment, regular maintenance helps to maximise its lifespan, maintain its appearance and reduce the likelihood of small issues developing into more costly repairs.

To help you get started, we've put together five simple maintenance tips that can make a real difference.

Five Simple Canopy Maintenance Tips

1. Keep Gutters and Downpipes Clear

Leaves, moss and other debris can quickly build up during autumn, preventing rainwater from draining away effectively. Clearing your guttering and downpipes regularly helps maintain good water flow and prevents unnecessary strain on the canopy.

2. Give the Roof a Gentle Clean

Over time, dirt, bird droppings and environmental debris can accumulate on the roof. Washing your canopy using warm soapy water and a soft cloth or sponge will help maintain its appearance and maximise the amount of natural light passing through the roof panels.

3. Visually Inspect the Structure

Take a walk around your canopy every few months and look for anything unusual, such as loose fixings, damaged roof panels or signs of accidental impact. Spotting small issues early can help prevent larger problems later.

4. Check the Area Around Your Canopy

Trim back any overhanging branches and remove leaves or debris that may collect around the canopy. This helps reduce unnecessary wear while keeping the surrounding area safe and tidy.

5. Arrange Professional Advice if You're Unsure

If you've noticed any damage, movement or general wear, it's always worth seeking professional advice before the weather worsens. A quick inspection can often identify minor issues before they become more significant.

Free Canopy Care Checklist

To make seasonal maintenance even easier, we've created a simple checklist that you can keep on hand throughout the year. See overleaf for more details.

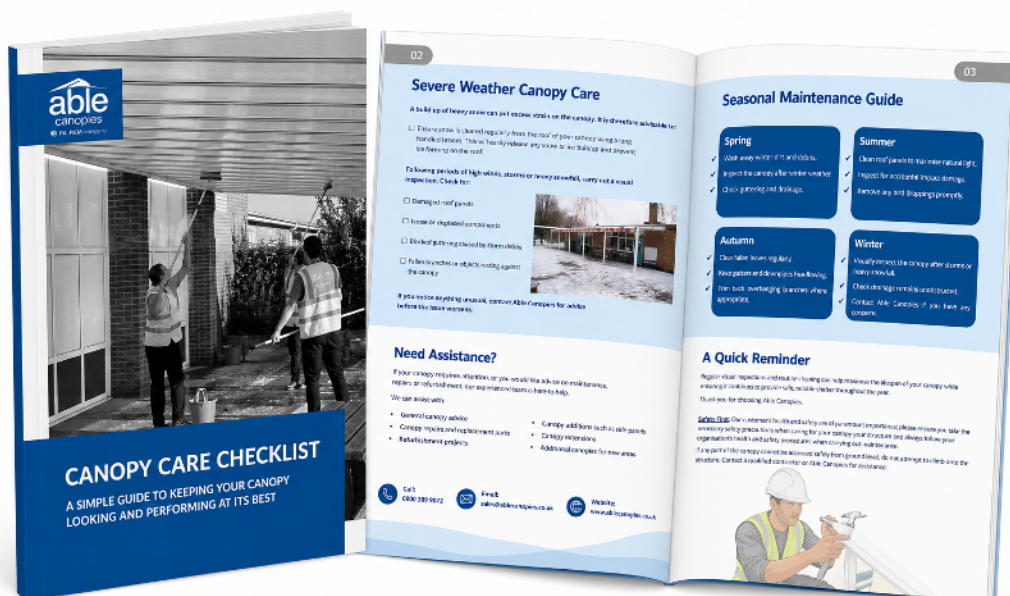
Our Canopy Care Checklist includes:

- ✓ Roof cleaning guidance
- ✓ Gutter and downpipe checks
- ✓ Visual inspection reminders
- ✓ Seasonal maintenance tips
- ✓ Simple actions to help maximise the lifespan of your canopy

Whether you complete the checks yourself or pass them to your facilities or maintenance team, it's a useful way to help keep your canopy in excellent condition year after year.



FREE CANOPY CARE CHECKLIST



VISIT: WWW.ABLECANOPIES.CO.UK/CARE

We're Here If You Need Us

If you have any questions about your existing canopy, our experienced team is always happy to help.

Whether you're looking for advice, replacement roofing panels, repairs, refurbishment work or you're considering extending your existing canopy or installing additional weather protection elsewhere on your site, we'd be delighted to discuss the options with you.

Simply reply to this email or call us on 0800 389 9072 to speak with one of our canopy experts.

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

Here's a selection of the canopies we have installed since the last edition of P&LO



Able Canopies: The Canopy Experts

A Grange Junior Freestanding Canopy installed at
The Unicorn Centre in the West Midlands

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

"Could you please pass on our sincere thanks to everyone involved, in particular, the installation team, who went above and beyond to ensure the project was completed to the highest standard. Despite the torrential rain, they continued to work with remarkable dedication and professionalism, ensuring the work was finished to an exceptional standard."

Their commitment, positive attitude and attention to detail did not go unnoticed, and we are extremely grateful for the effort they put in."

- The Unicorn Centre (above)
Installed August 2026

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

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



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