

Play & Learn Outdoors

from the canopy experts

able
canopies
& outdoor projects

Issue 3.2

March 2024

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WELCOME TO THE FEBRUARY EDITION OF PLAY & LEARN OUTDOORS

As I left my house this morning for work, I instantly smelt 'spring' in the air, which can only mean one thing; warmer, brighter days are on the way. And with that, brings more time spent outside for all.

This edition of P&LO is therefore hitting your desk at just the right time. It's full of outdoor play and learning ideas, funding tips, and inspiration for your outdoor area.

We also feature some important tips to keep your existing canopies and shelters spick and span, to prolong their lifespan and keep them looking newer for longer.

When you get a chance, take a break, sit back, relax with your favorite drink and have a flick through this edition of P&LO. Hopefully you'll be able to take

some ideas back to the classroom to enable you and your pupils to enjoy the great outdoors throughout all of spring safely.

If you enjoy reading P&LO, why not pass a copy or two 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 the spring and we'll be back in the summer for more ideas and inspiration.

Best Wishes

Tracy Meakins
Managing Director



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 people, fellow 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 that you can gather and share ideas, discuss what has worked for you and what didn't, saving you and others time, and enabling you to hold outdoor sessions that work out perfectly for both you and your pupils.

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!

We'd absolutely love to have you join us and we'd love even more to turn this into a UK wide, bustling community for teachers and education professionals to engage and offer support and advice.

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UNLOCKING FUNDING:

11 Smart Tips for Successful Grant Applications

Are you embarking on a significant project that seems dauntingly expensive? It might be the perfect moment to explore grant opportunities. To guide you through the process, here are 11 top tips to consider before diving into lengthy application forms:

1. Team Effort for Grant Success

Don't leave the whole responsibility of applying for the grant to one person. Applying for grants can involve a lot of work and research, so spread the responsibility to avoid putting too much pressure on one person.

2. Collaboration and Engagement

Make the grant application process engaging by encouraging everyone's participation. Seek opinions, advice, and ideas from your team, turning them into actionable strategies that foster a sense of inclusion.

3. Craft a Strategic Plan

Success requires a plan. Establish a strategy that outlines roles, responsibilities, and actions for a seamless application process.

4. Early Project Planning

Allocate dedicated time for comprehensive project planning, creating timelines and budgets to keep your fundraising campaign well organised.

5. Regular Updates and Meetings

Maintain open communication by holding regular committee meetings. Keeping everyone informed fosters collaboration and allows for the sharing of ideas and inspiration.

6. Utilise Local Networks

Don't overlook the fundraising opportunities in your community. Leverage your school's website, newsletters, flyers, and posters to spread the word about your project.

7. Conduct Thorough Research

In the world of grant applications, knowledge is power. Conduct thorough research to understand the nuances and best practices involved.

8. Precise Budgeting

Carefully calculate the funds needed. Avoid requesting too much or too little. Obtain quotes for all required services and products to determine accurate budgets.

9. Quality Matters

Even though it's not your money, prioritise quality. Obtain at least three quotes for each product or service to ensure the best combination of quality and price.

10. Details Speak Volumes

In your application, attention to detail is crucial. Provide comprehensive information on how the project will benefit, address challenges, and make a positive impact, all within the specified word limit.

11. Be SMART in Objectives

Craft SMART project objectives—Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely. Funders want to understand how the grant will transform your setting and make a lasting difference.

FREE Funding Guide

For a curated list of the top grants available visit:



www.ablecanopies.co.uk/guides

CASE STUDY: BARKING ABBEY SCHOOL, LONDON

Customer: London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council

Architect: Munday & Cramer

Product and Size:

Longbridge Campus –

1.66m x 13.16m Tarnhow Dome Freestanding Canopy connected to a 8.5m x 7.1m Tarnhow Curved Freestanding Canopy

Sandringham Campus –

20.16m x 11.66m Tarnhow Dome Freestanding Canopy

Groundworks Canopy Package –

900sqm of strip out, 600sqm of paving slabs and 300sqm of tarmac

Installation of 60m Aco Hexdrain drainage and 13 gully drains.

Frame Colour: Nutwood

Installation Date: July & August 2022



The Brief

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council were an existing customer of ours, having completed Glulam Timber Canopies at Eastbrook Primary School and Manor Longbridge Infant School, both in Dagenham. During a meeting with them regarding the above schools, they mentioned a project at Barking Abbey School.

Barking Abbey School is a very large school with two campuses in East London which serves the boroughs of Barking & Dagenham and Redbridge. They are a non-selective, comprehensive,

twelve form entry school that was founded in 1922, and has a proud tradition of academic and sporting success.

The Solution

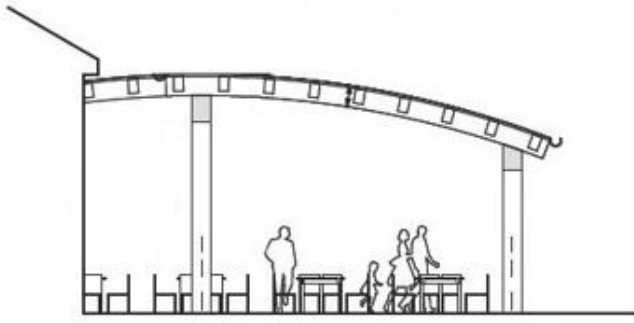
Following the meeting, Munday and Cramer, the Architects working on the project, sent us the proposal drawings which specified our Tarnhow Glulam Timber Canopies and were in their words 'similar to the Eastbrook School project.'

Upon receiving the documents, we sent an estimate for three Freestanding Tarnhow Glulam Timber Canopies including a domed canopy at the

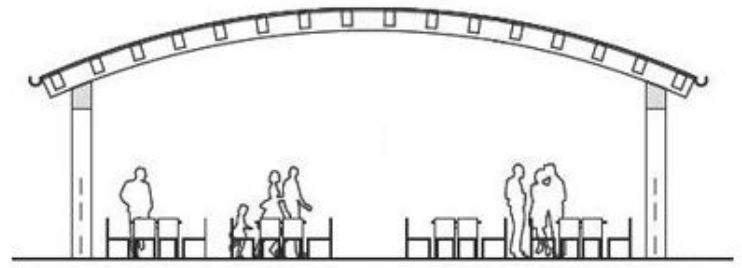
Sandringham site, and a domed canopy with a curved canopy attached to fit around an external corner at the Longbridge site. The canopy dimensions were:

- Sandringham campus: 20 metres x 11.5 metres
- Longbridge campus: (L shape canopy) 11.5 metres x 13 metres + 8.5 metres x 6.5 metres

With the previous projects we have completed for London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council, we also completed the groundworks side of the project by resurfacing areas underneath canopies, underground



Above: Architects vision of the Longbridge campus canopy (Image credit: Munday & Cramer)



Above: Architects vision of the Sandringham campus canopy (Image credit: Munday & Cramer)

drainage and new fencing and walls. We therefore reminded them of this which can be extremely useful as it reduces admin time for them as they are dealing with less contractors and less paperwork. This service is available as part of our Outdoor Projects Canopy Package which means we can complete groundworks, fencing and other requirements, so we can take care of the whole project for you from start to finish.

As this is a considerably large project, a team member from Munday and Cramer expressed that he was a little concerned however, our

Technical Sales Advisor reassured him about our capabilities and what we can provide for the project. They discussed foundation sizes, connections & loadings, and he was very impressed with what we can do and how closely we work with the council.

The canopies required planning permission and once it was granted, Munday and Cramer confirmed that we were the preferred contractor, and they would like us to take care of the full works including the drainage and landscaping.

The final canopy sizes chosen once we had completed a full site survey were:

Sandringham campus: 20.16m x 11.66m

Longbridge campus: 11.66m x 13.16m
Tarnhow Dome connected to a 8.5m x 7.1m
Tarnhow Curved freestanding Canopy.

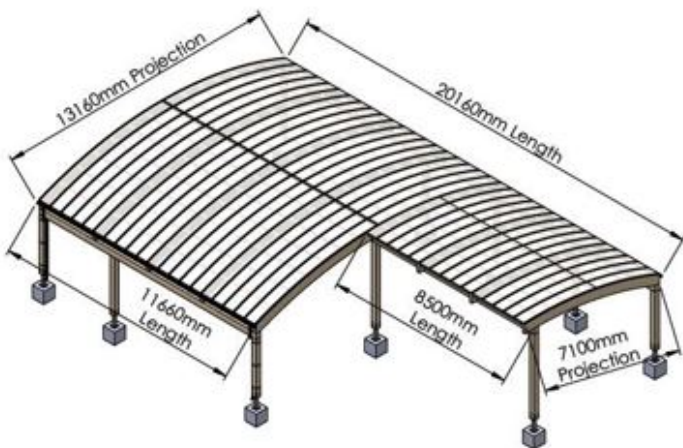
We also agreed to complete the following groundworks as part of the whole canopy package across both sites. A total of:

900sqm of strip out

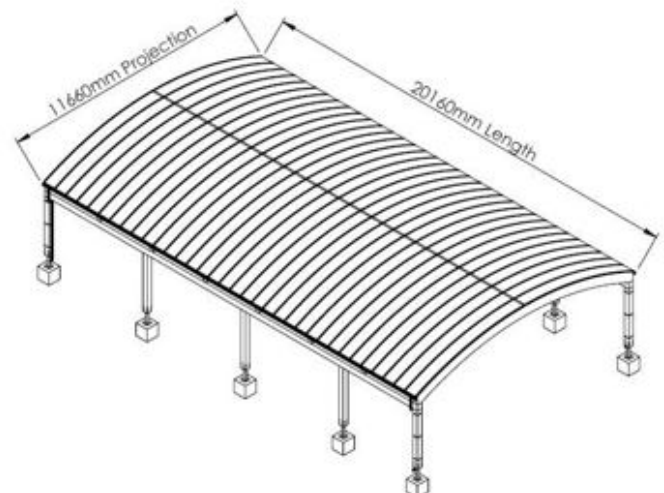
600sqm of paving slabs

300sqm of tarmac

Installation of 60m Aco Hexdrain drainage and 13 gully drains.



Above: Our production drawing for the Longbridge campus canopy



Above: Our production drawing for the Sandringham campus canopy

The Installation

We began work on site by initiating the groundwork phase, which involved laying foundations and installing the canopies. Following this, we proceeded to finish the groundwork tasks, which included laying paving slabs and fulfilling drainage requirements.

The Longbridge site was completed in July 2022 and the Sandringham site was completed in August 2022. Please note, the picnic tables shown in the photos were supplied by another contractor.

The Longbridge canopy covers 26 picnic tables which can seat from 156-208 children and the

Sandringham campus canopy covers 28 picnic benches which can seat from 168 – 224 children at any given time. This dramatically reduces the congestion inside their dining hall and gives their pupils much more room to move around, all whilst enjoying the fresh air.



ARE YOU READY FOR OUTDOOR CLASSROOM DAY IN MAY?

Outdoor Classroom Day, which will be celebrated on 23rd May and 7th November this year, is a global initiative that encourages schools to take learning beyond the traditional four walls. This presents a fantastic opportunity to explore the integration of school canopies, providing both shelter and a conducive environment for open-air learning.

Imagine a classroom without boundaries, where learning takes place under the open sky, surrounded by the beauty of nature. Outdoor Classroom Day invites schools worldwide to step outside and explore the myriad benefits of learning in the great outdoors.

The Power of Outdoor Learning:

Numerous studies highlight the positive impact of outdoor education on students' physical and mental well-being. From increased concentration to enhanced creativity, the benefits are undeniable. It's a chance to break away from the traditional and embrace an educational experience that transcends the confines of four walls.

Transformative Spaces with Able Canopies Limited:

For schools ready to embrace the outdoors, Able Canopies Limited

stands as a reliable partner in transforming your vision into reality. Our high-quality school canopies are designed not just to provide shelter but to create dynamic and adaptable outdoor learning spaces. The possibilities are as vast as the outdoors themselves.

Creating Comfortable and Weather-Resistant Spaces:

Our canopies offer more than just shade. They provide a sheltered environment that accommodates learning in various weather conditions, ensuring that outdoor education remains a viable and enjoyable option throughout the year. It's about creating a comfortable space where both students and educators can thrive.

Inspiring Stories from Schools Like Yours:

Explore the success stories of schools that have embraced outdoor learning with Able Canopies Limited. Discover firsthand how our canopies have played a pivotal role in creating inspiring and functional outdoor classrooms. Realise the potential for your school to become a part of this transformative movement.



A Personal Invitation:

As we approach Outdoor Classroom Day, consider this a personal invitation to join the global community of educators who believe in the power of outdoor learning. Let Able Canopies Limited be your partner in creating outdoor spaces that enrich the educational experience, fostering a love for learning that extends far beyond the classroom.

Conclusion:

Outdoor Classroom Day is not just a date on the calendar; it's an opportunity to redefine the way we approach education. Together, let's celebrate the joy of learning under the open sky and create a legacy of memorable educational experiences.

Contact us today, and let's embark on this journey together. The great outdoors awaits, and so does the potential for transformative learning.

INSTALLING SCHOOL CANOPIES WITHOUT EXTRA COSTS: OUR HOLIDAY INSTALLATION PROMISE

Discover how, unlike others, we would never charge you extra if you choose to have your canopy installed during the holidays

At Able Canopies, we understand the importance of seamless improvements and upgrades to educational environments. Schools are constantly evolving spaces, requiring enhancements that do not disrupt the educational process. Recognising this, we are proud to announce that our specialised canopy installation services during school holidays incur no extra charge and never have. This commitment underscores our dedication to providing value-driven, hassle-free solutions for educational institutions across the UK.

Why Choose School Holiday Canopy Installations?

School holidays present an ideal opportunity for upgrades. During these periods, the absence of students and staff allows for faster, safer, and more efficient project execution. Our expert team at Able Canopies takes advantage of this time, ensuring school canopies are installed without interrupting the daily

routines and learning activities of the school.

We are however, fully trained and experienced in installing our canopies during school term times, and we are able to do so safely, with minimal disruption to the regular running of your school day.

No Additional Cost - Our Promise

We believe in transparent pricing and straightforward policies. Recognising the financial constraints often faced by educational institutions, we have never charged extra for installations conducted during the school holidays. This policy is part of our commitment to support schools in their mission to create conducive learning environments, enabling them to plan upgrades without worrying about inflated costs during more convenient times.

Tailored Solutions for Every School

Understanding that each school has unique needs, Able Canopies offers bespoke



canopy solutions. Whether the requirement is for playground shelters, outdoor classroom spaces, or walkway coverings, our team is committed to designing and installing high-quality, durable canopies that enhance the outdoor spaces of educational institutions.

Get in Touch

To learn more about how Able Canopies can assist with your school's next project, or to discuss our holiday installation policy further, please contact us. Our team of canopy experts is here to provide you with a personal and friendly customer service experience that is second to none. Together, let's create spaces that inspire learning and growth, without the burden of extra costs or disruptions.

EXCITING OUTDOOR EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR SPRINGTIME EXPLORATION

As the freshness of spring is almost in our grasps with its vibrant colours and improved weather, it's an opportune time to plan your springtime outdoor learning sessions. Here are some engaging and educational ideas to consider for the season:

Enchanting Fairy Gardens:

Cultivate the imagination of young minds by creating fairy gardens in your school garden or playground. Utilise everyday materials such as toilet roll tubes and cardboard boxes, along with natural materials such as twigs, moss, and stones. This delightful activity not only fosters creativity but also imparts valuable craft skills, motor skills, and design elements. Integrate science by observing and discussing changes in the garden after wet or windy weather.

Timeless Clay Prints:

Harness the wonders of nature in artistic endeavours with clay

prints. Capture leaf impressions that can be painted later for a personalised touch. Extend the activity by having children craft nature models like trees or garden scenes. This not only explores artistic expression but also provides lessons in materials (such as the transformation of clay) and the diversity of tree leaves.

Feed our Feathery Friends:

Create an immersive learning experience by observing birds feeding from a bird feeder. This activity offers insights into bird species, their unique features, and the importance of conservation. Elevate the experience by experimenting with different foods and observing the birds' preferences. Pose questions like, do they favour fruits, vegetables, mealworms, or seeds? Also, download bird identification sheets and ask



pupils to tick off the birds they spot.

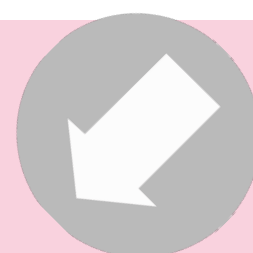
Conclusion:

Spring provides an abundance of learning opportunities for educational settings which are both enjoyable and educational. To minimise classroom mess and provide shelter from unpredictable weather, these activities can be enjoyed under the protection of a school canopy.

We would love to hear about your planned springtime learning activities and any tips you may have for making the most of this vibrant season.

VISIT OUR BLOG TO ENTER A WORLD OF OUTDOOR LEARNING AND PLAY IDEAS

www.ablecanopies.co.uk/blog



SPRING CLEANING FOR YOUR CANOPY

HOW TO KEEP YOUR CANOPY IN TIP-TOP CONDITION



As we dive into the annual tradition of spring cleaning at home, let's not forget the importance of sprucing up our outdoor structures. If your business or educational premises have a canopy, now is the perfect time to give it a thorough cleanse.

Why Clean Your Canopy?

Regular cleaning, ideally every 6–12 months, helps maintain the appearance and functionality of your canopy. This spring cleaning routine ensures that your outdoor space remains inviting and well-kept throughout the year.

How to Clean Your Canopy: A Gentle Approach

Follow these simple steps for effective cleaning without compromising the integrity of your canopy:

1. Mild Soapy Water Solution:

Use a soft cloth or sponge dipped in a mild, warm soapy water solution to gently wipe down the canopy.

2. Rinse with Low-Pressure Water:

Rinse the canopy with clean, low-pressure water, such as from a hose pipe. This step ensures the removal of any soap residue and leaves your canopy looking refreshed.

What **NOT** to Use:

Avoid the use of the following items altogether, as they can damage your canopy:

- Pressure Washers
- Nylon Scouring Pads
- Thinners & White Spirits
- Methylated Spirits
- Cream Household Cleaners
- Any other powerful cleaners and abrasive cleaning pads

By adopting a gentle cleaning routine this spring, you'll not only keep your canopy in top condition, but also create a welcoming outdoor space for the seasons ahead.

CAN CHILDREN BENEFIT FROM OUTDOOR READING?

Outdoor reading, whether under the canopy of a forest school or beneath the shade of a school canopy, offers a unique and enriching experience for students. Here are some key benefits of taking your school's reading sessions outdoors:

Enhanced Creative Engagement

Outdoor settings can bring stories to life. By acting out scenes or trying activities mentioned in their books, students can immerse themselves more deeply in the narrative. This experiential learning can boost their retention of the story, characters, and key themes.

Connection with Nature

Reading stories set outdoors while being outside can add an extra layer of immersion. The natural elements, like the wind or the sounds of nature, can make the storytelling more memorable and engaging while also helping to maintain high attention levels. Research shows that outdoor learning can lead to improved memory recall, though the setting should be chosen wisely.

Opportunity for Smaller Reading Groups

Outdoor spaces naturally lend themselves to smaller, more intimate reading groups. This setting can increase student engagement and confidence,



especially for those who might be hesitant to participate in larger groups. Smaller groups also allow for a better assessment of each student's comprehension and engagement.

Relaxation Leads to Learning

A relaxed environment is conducive to learning. Being outdoors can not only enhance students' understanding of their reading material but also positively impact their mental health. This relaxed state can foster improved learning throughout the school day.

Conclusion

Outdoor reading is often depicted in films and literature as a delightful and beneficial activity. Characters are seen reading in gardens, on beaches, or in the woods. By recreating this experience in your school, you offer students not just a better reading experience but also a chance to enhance their overall learning. So why not take advantage of your school's outdoor spaces and transform them into dynamic reading environments?

CASE STUDY: SWANWICK HALL SCHOOL - OUTDOOR DINING AREA CANOPY

Academy Trust:

Two Counties Trust

Product:

Welford Dome Freestanding Canopy

Size:

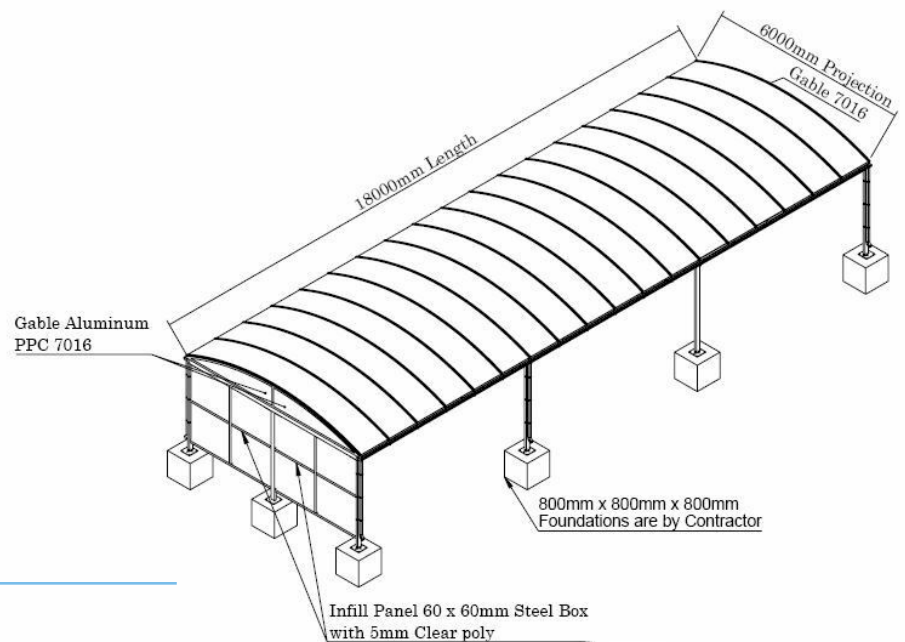
18m x 6m

Frame Colour:

Anthracite Grey (RAL 7016)

Installation Date:

November 2023 & January 2024



Brief

Swanwick Hall School in Derbyshire have been an existing customer of Able Canopies since 2011 when we supplied and installed a 34m Coniston Wall Mounted Canopy that wrapped around one corner of their school building, to create continuous cover from the weather.

The school which was first opened in 1922 as a grammar school in what was formerly a country house, and is now run by the Two Counties Trust, contacted us again in 2023 regarding their requirements for another school canopy.

They were looking to add shade and shelter to an area within their school grounds which could be used by the children to dine outside all year round. Outdoor dining canopies are extremely popular within schools as they enable them to effectively extend their dining room

capacity without the higher expense and disruption a brick-built extension causes.

The Solution

They originally wanted to cover an area of 20m x 6m so upon consultation, we suggested the Welford Dome Freestanding Canopy as this can easily cover the size required due to the unlimited length and maximum span of up to 6 metres.

The Welford Dome Freestanding Canopy can also be fitted with side and front fills to partially enclose the canopy, adding more protection from the weather including wind and driving rain. Swanwick Hall School opted for a side panel along one end of the canopy for this reason.

Due to the age of the main building, the school required planning permission and a heritage statement. Although we offer a free planning assistance service, the school decided to file

the application themselves, we did however produce the drawings and specification required for the planning application including the location plan, block plan, existing elevation plan and the proposed plan. We also wrote the heritage statement which supported both applications greatly.

The Installation

Once planning had been granted, the school confirmed they wanted to go ahead with the 18m x 6m Welford Dome Freestanding Canopy as quoted with a 5mm solid polycarbonate end panel. We were therefore able to install the canopy in November 2023 yet, because the making good, drainage and tarmac flooring was being completed by an alternative contractor that was already on site completing other projects, we returned to install the end panel in January 2024 to complement their schedule.

The completed canopy was therefore ready to use in mid-January 2024, providing their pupils with a dry and sheltered area where they can enjoy their lunch throughout the whole year. This not only gives them the choice to dine outside in the fresh air, but it also frees up space within the main dining

room, making it less busy and confined. A member of staff from the school commented on how it had *"improved our students dining experience"* and it was a *"great solution to limited indoor dining space"*. Which is why we do what we do, to provide you with the perfect

solution to your problems.

If you are looking to achieve the same result as Swanwick Hall School and provide an airy and spacious area that is protected from the elements, contact our expert team to find out how we can help you achieve exactly that.



Above: Before the Canopy installation



Above & Below: After the Canopy installation



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





Able Canopies: The Canopy Experts



The Codale Conic Tensile Fabric Canopy installed at Thorn Grove Primary School, Hertfordshire in February 2024

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

"I would just like to say thank you for our canopy installation this week. From when the guys pulled on site Tuesday morning, to leaving yesterday, they were professional, helpful and hassle free. I will recommend to all the schools in the area that if they are looking for canopies to contact you."

- Thorn Grove Primary School,
Hertfordshire
Installed February 2024

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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