

Play & Learn Outdoors

able
canopies
& outdoor projects

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Fun Ideas to Expand a Safe Learning Environment for Your School

**Exploring
Forest
Schools**

Page 9

**Harvest Festival
Season Fun**

Page 3

**Creating
Outdoor Spaces**

Page 4

**Recruiting
New**

**PTFA
Members**

Page 11

**Hair-Rasing
Halloween
Fundraising**

Page 6

Page 12

**Dates
for Your
Diary**

WELCOME TO THE SEPTEMBER EDITION OF PLAY & LEARN OUTDOORS

The new school year has begun and what a summer it's been. We've been treated to wonderful weather (albeit a lack of rain for our thirsty ground), with many memories made over the last few months.

The summer is always our busiest time here at Able Canopies HQ and this year was no different. We've enjoyed installing every single one of your canopies and seeing your outdoors spaces transformed

into areas that can be used all year round. We really appreciate all the feedback we received from you, so if you have any comments on your canopy and the service you received, we'd love to hear it.

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.

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 last of the warm weather and we'll be back in the winter for more ideas and inspiration.

Best Wishes
Tracy Meakins
Managing Director

CONTENTS

Page 3	Harvest Festival Season Fun	Page 9	Exploring Forest Schools
Page 4	Creating Outdoor Spaces	Page 10	Why Are Timber Canopies So Popular
Page 5	A 1 Minute Canopy Installation	Page 11	Recruiting New PTFA Members
Page 6	Hair-Raising Halloween Fundraising	Page 12	Dates for Your Diary
Page 7	Dagenham School Canopy Feature	Page 14-15	Canopy Inspiration
Page 8	Commemorating Student Achievements		

Our New Product Data Sheets Are Live

After a couple of months in the making, our new product data sheets have been finalised and are now live on our website.

We have given them a whole new look which has a clean appearance and is easy to read. The new layout is in a table format so it's easier to read and digest the information. The tables also make it easier to compare our products to help you choose the perfect canopy or shelter for your project.

You can view and download the product data sheets directly from each product page on our website; once you are on the product page, click on the specifications tab and you will find the download link.



ITS HARVEST FESTIVAL SEASON

It's September, which means it's the start of the new school year and it also means its harvest festival season.

The return to school can often mean that the harvest season gets a little forgotten however, we've put together some ideas to ensure you make the most of the seasonal fun it has to offer. This includes helping children learn about nutrition and food, lifecycles, local culture, other cultures and even history.

So here's how you can turn this year's harvest festival into an educational and fun time.

Hold Your Own Festival

Harvest festivals were a time for fun and celebrating, something that in the past couple of years have been lost. However, now those times can return and you can put on an event which parents and families can come and enjoy. Rides, entertainment, competitions and more can be hosted.

These can also be a great time to host fundraising activities for your current projects.

Cooking Classes

From locally grown crops or perhaps a selection of British-grown fruits and vegetables, the harvest period is a time to teach children how to cook meals. Helping them to prepare small dinners or small side dishes is a great way for children to learn about balanced meals and kitchen skills.

Cooking classes can be carried



out in small groups, offering younger children more one-on-one time with teachers and teaching assistants.

History

Harvest festivals are full of history. They're a great way to explore culture, but also to learn about big events in history. You could get the children to explore the history of the English harvest fluctuations of the 15-17th centuries or you could look at how the potato famine impacted Ireland.

Exploring these periods could encourage the your pupils to talk about the long-term consequences. But they can also explore the causes whether it was weather, plague or vermin.

Culture

Most cultures celebrate the harvest in some form and exploring these can be a great way for children to learn more about diversity and the world. Children can watch videos of other cultures or perhaps invite

guest speakers who are willing to show their culture to the children.

There might be children in the class who have parents or grandparents who might want to share their stories too.

Lifecycles

Whether you're looking at the lifecycle of a plant or an animal, the harvest time is perfect time to show this. Children can grow cress in the class, which can then be used in a cooking class to show how a seed can turn into a plant and then seed itself.

Lifecycles are an important learning objective for many classes, so this is a great time to add it to the academic calendar.

Conclusion

Harvest time is a great time for learning and fun. On this page are four options that can help you celebrate this time as well as teach children many wonderful lessons.

CREATING OUTDOOR SPACES COME RAIN OR SHINE



Thanks to advancements in weather protection solutions, schools are no longer restricted when it comes to learning spaces. Our Project Account Manager Josh Foord looks at the latest ideas to consider when designing an outdoor learning environment.

The benefits of outdoor spaces for schools have long been established. However, unpredictable weather conditions can prevent schools making the most of the opportunities. A high-quality canopy or shelter can be used to create outdoor classrooms, free flow play areas into the outdoors and all-weather outside dining areas.

One way in which schools can extend their space outside is by creating sheltered areas directly outside classrooms that can be easily accessed by teachers and pupils. Our wall mounted canopies can achieve projections of up to six meters from the building with additional support posts. The versatility of many systems allows the shelter to conform to part of building and even be installed across elevation changes.

Equipment and furniture can be placed in the sheltered areas to create a semi-permanent learning space with options available to secure it outside of school hours. For example, discreet roller shutters can be installed that do not affect the use of the space during the day but secure the area at night.

In addition, large span canopies allow sizeable, versatile outdoor areas to be achieved with no central supports. For example, at Jo Richardson Community School in Dagenham (as shown below right) our Tarnhow Dome Free Standing Timber Canopy was used to create a shelter in the space between three buildings that was 35 metres long and five metres high with an 11 metre span.

Furthermore, where a greater level of weather protection is required, more enclosed spaces can be created. Side and front fill panels, fabricated from safe, shatter resistant polycarbonate, can be fitted to the shelter to form a space that is usable in almost any weather.

While it is often assumed that canopies are used to provide protection against rain and snow, shelter from the sun is just as important – especially during the spring and summer months. For example, the polycarbonate roof panels used on many of our systems block in excess of 98% of harmful UV rays while still allowing plenty of diffused light through to illuminate the space.

Alternatively, a waterproof tensile shade canopy can be installed to provide a stylish option for both shade and shelter from the rain. This cost-effective solution consists of commercial grade tensile fabric supported by a free-standing frame.



Finally, in an educational setting the aesthetics are particularly important to create a fun, positive and welcoming environment – especially in an early year’s school or nursery. There are a number of options available to customise the canopy or shelter. Colourful post pads not only make the area safer but also introduce a splash of colour. Coloured roof panels are also available with some canopies and can be mixed and matched to create a bright, colourful space.

The choice of materials also allows different looks to be achieved. Steel and aluminium structures can be powder coated in a specific RAL colour to match the surrounding

buildings or school colours. Where a more natural finish is required, Glulam timber canopies provide a strong, sustainable and cost-effective alternative.

The diverse needs and characteristics of schools and their buildings mean that there is no 'one size fits all' solution. Canopy specialists such as ourselves can help specifiers and contractors to select and plan the solution that is right for the application and meet any budgetary restrictions.

If you have a project you’d like us to look at, send an email to sales@ablecanopies.co.uk or call us on 0800 389 9072.



A CANOPY INSTALLATION IN LESS THAN 1 MINUTE?



Yes, you did read that title correctly and no it’s not entirely true. However, it is true that you can watch a full canopy installation in less than one minute.

Thanks to time lapse technology, you can watch the full six-day canopy installation we completed at a secondary school in Shropshire in a bitesize time.

During the last week of July 2022, we supplied and installed a mega 40 metre Coniston Wall Mounted Canopy at Charlton School.

They were looking to cover a large part of their recreation area within their school grounds, they wanted their students to be able to socialise and enjoy their break times outside with their friends all

year round in the great outdoors.

This was a great installation to document on film due to its large length and the wonderful, modern area it is situated within. The installation took place over six days and the end result was just as we had planned, leaving the school with a large, covered area that can be used in all weathers because not only does it shelter from the rain, it also protects from over 98% of the sun’s UV rays, making the area underneath cooler and lowering the risk of sunburn for pupils while they are under the canopy.

To watch the video head to: www.ablecanopies.co.uk/blog/ and click on the blog post titled 'A Canopy Installation in less than 1 minute?'

HAIR-RAISING HALLOWEEN FUNDRAISING IDEAS FOR SCHOOLS



It's been a fantastic summer this year with lots of sunshine and lots of canopies being put to full use. However, all good things must come to an end and as we head into September, the autumn will settle in within the blink of an eye. So, it's not all bad, with the autumn comes exciting changes in the seasons that can be used within your lessons, along with lots of fundraising opportunities especially as we then transition into the festive season.

However, let's not get ahead of ourselves, (although planning ahead is key) we have the spooky season to enjoy first, so here's some terrifyingly good Halloween fundraising ideas.

Put on a Halloween Fancy Dress Disco

Halloween is the best time of year for dressing up so if you're not holding a Halloween fancy dress disco then you really are missing out, not just on funds for your pot, but on lots of fun too. Raise money by charging a small entry fee, selling snacks and drinks, and to add a little more fun, award prizes for the

most inventive costumes. If a teacher or staff member is handy with a camera, you could also take professional portraits and group photos and sell the prints for added profit.

Hold a Halloween Fun Day

Just like you would a summer fair yet make it very autumnal and Halloween themed. Include harvest stalls and ask parents to donate any excess fruit and veg they have grown for you to sell. Include craft making stalls where children and adults can make things such as autumn wreaths for their front doors, pumpkin carving and Halloween lanterns (recycled glass jars, covered with white or orange tissue paper with spooky pumpkin or bat shaped cut-out areas so the light shines through).

You could also have a games area and include games such as pumpkin smashing, cover traffic cones with black card and a round piece of card on the bottom to replicate a witches hat and toss rings onto the witches hats. Another idea is Halloween bowling where

you use a pumpkin as a bowling ball and butternut squash as the pins.

Host a Frightening Film Night

If you fancy organising something that's a little more relaxed, host a couple of film nights with child-friendly scary films such as Hocus Pocus, Caroline and Monsters Inc. You can set up your hall with a projector for a nice big screen, drape dark coloured material along the walls and the windows to block out light and set the scene. You could also add Halloween garlands and decorations to finish it off perfectly. You can also sell spooky snacks and drinks for added pennies and to make the evening more authentic, with every ticket sold, hand out actual tickets and when they arrive punch a hole in them or tear them into half as cinemas used to.

There's lots more fundraising ideas on our blog, so head to www.ablecanopies.co.uk/blog/ for ideas that you can action throughout the year.

A REPLACEMENT CANOPY FOR A SCHOOL IN DAGENHAM

Valence Primary School in Dagenham is a state primary school which also has an on-site nursery school. Their aim to create a happy, healthy, safe and secure learning environment for their pupils.

The Project Manager at London Borough of Barking and Dagenham reached out to us because the school had an existing enclosed canopy which they previously purchased elsewhere and was unfortunately no longer fit for purpose. They therefore needed a replacement so that their staff and pupils could continue to use the outdoor space under a canopy that was safe and secure. The new canopy would need to be high-quality and last for many years.

Because their existing structure was enclosed, they wanted their new structure to also be enclosed and mounted onto the wall in the same location. Given

all the requirements, it was clear that the Coniston Wall Mounted Canopy was the perfect solution for their requirements. The Coniston is extremely versatile, it can be wall mounted or free standing, it can be supplied with side panels to enclose it and is supplied with a 10 year guarantee and a 25 year life expectancy; fulfilling all of their needs.

Adding canopy side panels to the Coniston canopy transforms it into a modular outdoor classroom. We can also add lockable doors to the Coniston however, the school opted to have the doorways open, which is a nice touch as it makes it much airier inside and still gives

the feeling of being outside rather than in an enclosed classroom.

The canopy we supplied and installed at the school in Dagenham was 12 metres long and projected 3.7 metres from the wall. The area looks much neater, more modern and is also safe to use again, leaving the teachers and pupils with a new covered outdoor space that can be used all year round.



5 GREAT WAYS TO COMMEMORATE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

With the start of the new school year, You may be thinking of ways you can celebrate students' achievements throughout the year ahead. This could be for year 6 children off to secondary school or you might want to celebrate the childrens' first year of school in reception or those moving from KS1 to KS2.

Celebrating their achievements throughout the year or at the end of each term, is a wonderful way to give them confidence and encourage them to keep working hard. It's a lovely way to say thank you to your pupils for being such stars.

A Celebration Variety Show

You can invite all the parents and perhaps set up the stage outside. You could provide a mixture of entertainment and presentations. You could highlight special achievements, and ask the children to perform if they would like or have any particular talents they would like to share.

A Survival Activity Night

Invite the children to visit the school and set up a survival activity evening. You could ask the teachers to set up different stations for survival skills. For example, one class could help children make dens.

Craft a Memory

You could ask for small donations for the children to craft an item to remember their school year by. A ceramic item to

decorate would be ideal, particularly for year 6 leavers as they could decorate the item with their friends' signatures.

Fun Sports Evening

You could put on a range of fun sports for the children to join in with and have a great time together. Simple games can work well for this such as a large parachute, rounders and cricket

for example.

Family BBQ

You could provide BBQ food for your pupils and their families. The food and drinks can be served from underneath a school canopy. This could be a great opportunity to raise funds for the next school project too.





EXPLORING FOREST SCHOOLS

“And into the forest I go to lose my mind and find my soul.” This is one of my favourite quotes and it’s written by a man named John Muir who is one of the most famous and influential naturalists in history. I think this quote explains so simply the magic and benefits that the impact of time spent in the forest can have on us.

That is, I believe why forest schools are becoming more popular and so I decided to explore forest schools and their benefits to help you decide if it’s something that you think would make a great addition to your school or nursery.

Whilst some children are very lucky to grow up in the countryside with access to open parks and gardens at home, some children live in the city and have no garden of their own or easy access to natural, green spaces. However, forest schools can be beneficial to all children from all areas of the UK, it just becomes more important for city children to have access to forest schools because it’s something they would otherwise never get

to experience.

Additionally, children that have gardens and green spaces to play in regularly, can still benefit hugely from forest schools because having access to green spaces doesn’t mean they have been taught the skills that you could teach them within a forest school.

So, what are those skills?

You can teach lots of different educational activities within a forest school such as den building, building bug houses, whittling, threading, weaving, and using obstacle courses, all of which build on **gross and fine motor skills**.

There are also many opportunities to develop **teamwork** through the building of dens and creating pieces of artwork using natural materials found on the forest ground. Making shelters, learning to use hand tools, and tying knots will develop their **physical skills**. Whereas producing art with natural items, making stick men, and designing nature jewellery will develop their **creative skills**.

Communication skills can also be improved as they will be learning words that they may never heard of before and the calming, natural environment can aid in relaxing them and resulting in them feeling more inclined to join in group discussions when they usually wouldn’t.

I have listed a handful of activities, but there are many more that you can introduce, all of which will **grow your children’s confidence** both within the forest school and beyond, thanks to an experience that is nothing like what they can discover at home.

Forest schools transform learning from a fairly rigid and clinical experience to a real experience that feels right and natural. To be able to teach children whilst surrounded by nature is a privilege and if you are able to set up a forest school within your nursery or school, you should absolutely take up the opportunity. **The forests are filled with magic and wonder, and you can introduce them to that.**

WHY ARE TIMBER CANOPIES SO POPULAR?

Lots of people will find themselves going with the flow and choosing a version of a product because it is popular, because everyone else is choosing it. However, when it comes to timber canopies, I'm going to tell you why they are so popular, and why many of our customers are opting for a timber canopy over a steel canopy.

The Aesthetics

The appearance of a timber canopy is liked by almost everyone including people with all different tastes. In fact, it's hard to find someone that doesn't like the appearance of a chunky wood structure against the backdrop of a school, nursery or university.

The Curvature

What's even better than a timber structure? That would be a curved timber structure. There's just something about curved wood that is striking and catches the eye, giving off a 'wow' effect. Large structures particularly look dramatic and extravagant. Our timber canopies can also be supplied with mono timber beams for those that prefer a more traditional timber canopy appearance.

They Compliment all Buildings, New and Old

We have installed our timber canopies against new builds as well as within the grounds of old



buildings including a Tarnhow Dome Timber Canopy which we installed within original castle ruins that are hundreds of years old as shown below, right. The photo above shows an example of where we have installed our timber canopies against contemporary new build.

They Can Cover Extra Large Areas

Many of our canopy designs in timber can cover extra large areas as well as smaller areas if required. This allows you to cover extra large areas as well as much smaller areas depending on your requirements.

There's a Choice of Design

We have five different timber canopies for you to choose from including wall mounted and free-standing designs as well as curved and flat roof structures. You are sure to find a design that fits in with what you have in mind, if not, because our structures are all made to order

we can alter the design, so you have the perfect canopy, bespoke to your requirements.

Choose from a Selection of Colours

You may think that a timber canopy comes in just a few different shades of timber however, you'll be pleasantly surprised to discover that our timber canopies are available in a total of 13 different stains. 10 of which are traditional timber colours including mahogany, shades of oak, teak and pine with two shades of grey and white for something a little different.





HOW TO RECRUIT NEW PTFA MEMBERS SUCCESSFULLY

It's well known that the times simply aren't like they used to be, parents are busier because most Mums and Dads now work full time, leaving little spare time for themselves yet alone anyone else. However, there are still some out there that have a little spare time and are looking for something to fill the gaps now their little ones are back at (or just starting) school.

Recruiting new volunteers for your PTA is something you really should take seriously, if you wait for people to approach you and ask if you need any help, you will have a very small team and each of you will end up overloaded with tasks, causing some to give it up completely and you don't want that.

So, what can you do? You can recruit new volunteers!

Advertise the volunteering positions

Advertise the volunteering positions to your preferred audience (i.e parents, their families

and friends) that you are looking for members.

You could get the message out there by including an advert in your school newsletter, on your social media channels, on your website and also hand leaflets out at events or at the end of day pick up times.

Make it appealing

When advertising for volunteers, make sure you explain what roles they could take on and explain about what's involved in each role to make them sound fun and engaging.

Explain the benefits such as being part of a community, making lifelong friends, raising funds that benefits their children's education and experience at the school. If it doesn't sound appealing, then no one will put themselves forward, so don't skip this part.

Give everyone an allocated 'volunteer role'

Within workplaces, everyone has

their own job role so, why should it be any different in volunteering groups? Giving everyone a specific role that reflects their skills will help the group to work better as a team because they will each have their role and enable them to fit together like a puzzle.

They can also work together on specific areas such as brainstorming fundraising ideas and advertising events. However, someone can take on the finance role, another can take on the design role and another can take on the purchasing role and so on.

This helps when recruiting volunteers because you can explain what skill set or talents you are looking for and if it speaks to someone, they are more likely to put themselves forward for it.

I hope these tips are helpful and enable you to recruit new volunteer members for your PTFA, resulting in more funds being raised for your school.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Don't miss out, make a note of these dates in your diary pronto!

There seems to be an awareness day or week for most things these days and it's easy to miss the ones that might be useful and provide the opportunity for a different teaching and learning experience.

Whilst we have some of the obvious days coming up such as Halloween and Bonfire Night, here's a few that you might not already know about, which you could incorporate into your lessons.



OCTOBER 2022

1st



International Music Day



7th

World Smile Day



16th

National Food Day



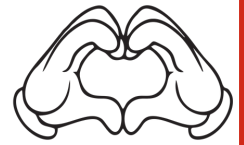
17th

Energy Saving Week



NOVEMBER 2022

All month



National Gratitude Month



7th

Colour the World Orange Day



12th

National Get Outside Week



14th

Anti-Bullying Week



Your Pupils Can Enjoy Alfresco Dining All Year Round

Including the winter

Have you been enjoying the extra space in your canteen this summer whilst your pupils have been enjoying their lunches outside? It can be like that all year round with the addition of a canopy.

A canopy will cover your outside picnic tables and free up space in your canteen, allowing pupils to continue enjoying lunches outside even in the wetter weather.



- We plant two trees for every school canopy order placed
- Free site survey - call us to find out if you qualify
- Virtual surveys also available
- Free canopy visual at the quoting stage
- Free press release service
- 1000's of canopies installed across the UK
- High customer satisfaction levels - see our website for our customer feedback
- Aftersales service - we're here throughout the whole process including after your canopy has been installed



CALL: 0800 389 9072

EMAIL: SALES@ABLECANOPIES.CO.UK

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: WWW.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



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

***“Excellent,
professional service.***

***We are very happy
with the canopy.”***

- Holy Trinity Roman Catholic
Primary School, Lancashire

(pictured above)

Installed June 2022

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

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