

Create space
for learning,
pupil's & teachers



Ideas for Outdoor Designs

INSPIRATION



A guide to
creating
useable
outdoor
spaces

PURPOSE

OFSTED

HOW

IDEAS

MORE

© 2009, Gardens123, Paula Revill, All Rights Reserved

1

Schools

2 – Wild Life
3 – Growing
4 – Classrooms

Outside the Classroom

In an age when many children no longer have the freedom to explore and create their own adventures, we are seeing the first generation of children being raised without meaningful contact with the natural world.

We are also witnessing children's inability to manage risk and therefore becoming less engaged with the learning process. For the healthy development of children's senses, creativity and therefore learning the connection with nature needs to be re-established.

By observing children in the outdoors we see a difference in behaviour from the hyperactive child playing well with others to the shy child becoming the leader.

Opening up the outdoors increases the learning environment for children and the teaching environment for teachers. It offers a broader view on the talents of every child.



With schools recorded to have access to £2 billion cash reserves but still 2 out of 5 schools bank roll more than recommended amounts across the financial years, the Audit Commission concluded it '*..can't be sure the tax payer is getting value for money*'.

Ofsted is increasingly recognising the benefits for 'Learning Outside the Classroom' and are giving higher priority for all year groups to have suitable and meaningful access to their school grounds.

They are not only looking for features and teaching use of the grounds but also 'value for money' and the better management of budgets and long term well thought out design.

A recent Ofsted study highlighted that '*...these valuable spaces have been lacking appropriate investment.*' and they are now encouraging schools to use capital reserves on their grounds which can double the amount of teaching and learning space.

Valuing your Grounds

As all schools know a policy driven action as part of the school ethos will have precedent and longevity over the ideas and wishes of a few proactive people.

It sets out the rationale, aims, strategies and review arrangements including people's roles and responsibilities. It involves senior management to lead curriculum planning across all subject, health and safety guidance and continued professional development for all staff.

Planning your Grounds

Learning through Landscapes offers schools a lot of useful tools and resources for planning your school grounds and advocates using the children and whole school community in the process.

Their model for success is a four stage cycle which starts with identifying 'what you have already' then 'what you would like to be able to do'. This is important for the teachers to identify teaching objectives outside. This is followed by 'how can this be achieved' and then 'making the changes'. It includes evaluating each stage and how to involve professionals along the way.

Designing your Grounds

Hopefully when a school gets to this stage there has been significant consultation to ensure the changes will be wanted and needed by all also the whole school including local community are onboard with the ideas.

Using a professional to take the teachers and children's ideas into a formalised plan will help the school obtain suitable quotes, phase the work appropriately and be in a better position to secure additional funding and volunteer help.

Creating your Grounds

What needs to be done and who is going to do it? Is planning permission needed for any aspect of the design? Can volunteers create all of the design through working parties or will the design (or school policy) require the work to be carried out by contractors?

It's all down to budgets, scale and timing but this was in the planning at the beginning so coordination should be easy!

Using your Grounds?

It's not just once the new area or grounds are created can the teaching and learning take place. Curriculum links are part of the planning and design process from:

Design and Technology – identifying seating requirements, how to construct the raised beds or working with a craft person.

Geography – interpreting different current features in the grounds, using aerial photographs or mapping the area.

Art and Design – creating design features to be added such as murals, wooden markers, sculptures or gathering precedent.

Working together is an important part of learning and personal development as a grounds project promotes team work whether painting a fence, planting a tree or creating a sculpture.

Observing other professionals at work from local artists, craft people to landscape designers and contractors creates the links from education to professional work. Pupils can observe the maths skills needed in creating scale designs, the literacy skills needed in relaying information to volunteers or the physical skills needed in brick laying.

Once the grounds are created then the opportunities are endless from storytelling, graffiti walls, sensory boxes, sound tunnels, weather stations, growing areas, insect hotels, puddle paths, music trails, willow dens and outdoor classrooms with fresh air, open views and less noise restriction.

In your Grounds

Of course there are the practical issues of getting the class from the classroom to the outdoor space to learn (time or behaviour), the equipment you might need to take with you to the space (pens, paper, cushions or folding chairs), the clothing the class might need (willies, hats, sun cream, coats).

All of these elements if discussed during the second phase of the planning 'what do we want to do in the space' will hopefully be overcome or made manageable within the curriculum planning.

The pupils will also need a few goes at getting the behaviour right as this will be a new and exciting prospect but once this settles down even the most disruptive children show signs of calm even if it's only for an extra 5 minutes than they would have achieve in a classroom!

At least the children wanting to work are less distracted as they can be further away from any noise or disruption.

'Schools in Design' has been created as a starting point of information and ideas to help you make the most of your outdoor space.

Gardens123 would like to thank you for your interest in our free guide and would like to take this opportunity to highlight a few more useful links and the range of our school grounds service.

Useful Websites

www.lotc.org.uk – 'Learning Outside the Classroom' resources.

www.ltl.co.uk – 'Learning through Landscapes' resources.

www.ofsted.gov.uk – Publications, Thematic-reports/Learning-outside-the-classroom with best practice guidance.

www.cabinco.co.uk/outdoor-classrooms.htm - shelters & gazebos for full class size teaching in any weather

www.marmaxproducts.co.uk/prodpage.asp?ProdID=1 – hard wearing and long lasting recycled benches and seating

<http://apps.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening/default.aspx>

Initial Consultations – (£45 consultation fee)

If you need design guidance, a little inspiration or a friendly chat about how to use your outdoor space to its advantage, book a visit with our Landscape designer.

The consultation involves a walk round your site with the head teacher and/or schools grounds coordinator to discuss whole school needs, curriculum links and future aspirations.

What We Offer

- Whole School Grounds or Specific Area Designs
- Consultation Package Options
- Reception Area Display Designs
- Sourcing Construction Quotes
- Project Coordination of construction
- Pupil Lessons during design process or in the new grounds
- Inset Training during consultation phase or in the new grounds

Visit **www.gardens123.co.uk** for more information.

Gardens123 hope you have found this guide interesting. We wish you all the best with your design ideas and look forward to hear from you again soon.