

SCHOOL GROUNDS IDEAS

Extend your classroom outside in almost all weathers and utilise every aspect for learning experiences. **NB: These ideas must be applied in compliance with current government advice on shared outdoor spaces and resources.**

WALLS (A blank canvas)

- Paint a fractions wall or times tables grids
- Mark out different angles in the brickwork
- Create a blackboard with a hardwood panel and blackboard paint
- Paint or fix on targets with number scores
- Create a transverse horizontal climbing wall

PLAYGROUND (Keep it open)

- Zone areas using colours, giant shapes, or themes e.g. countries.
- If adding traffic flow paths, use number or letter sequences to direct flow and recite on the move. (Alternatively, paint a river, train-line etc.)
- Paint a compass rose and human sundial
- Create a signpost to different countries of the world using accurate directions (can link with playground zones)
- Include recycling bins to teach sustainability

SHELTER (Extend outdoor time)

- Create multiple sheltered areas for gathering groups or individual quiet time.
- Semi-permanent to permanent options include: Sail canopies, army/ forest school style parachutes (can be set up by professionals to be permanent), living willow arbours (fast growing). You could also extend your school roofline with corrugated plastic. You can even hook a shower curtain onto a hula hoop for a one-person space.
- For additional temporary shelter, use large tarpaulins and rope or bamboo canes with a tarpaulin or old sheet.

FURNITURE

(Make it multipurpose)

- A grouping of poles of different heights can be used to: string up a tarpaulin, make a paracord maze, string up a washing line for hanging work or trails; distance individuals for working. The poles themselves can be painted up with measurements, fractions etc.
- Paint up a table as a board game and let children find natural materials for pieces. (Put dice in a clear ball and affix the ball to the table with rope.)
- Create a zone divider from upright logs. Paint these in repeating colours and add numbers to the tops. Use for seating (colours will help space children); as stepping stones and practice for number sequencing.
- Likewise, make seating a learning tool or game element (e.g. lay out as a Ludo board).



Bringing nature nearer

FREE PLAY/SOFT MATERIALS

More than just sensory: brilliant for maths, literacy, geography and history (archaeology).

- Make a mud kitchen or even just a mud patch.
- Create simple sand pits and water play areas from old containers (you can space these out). A tyre lined with a tarpaulin also works well.

GARDEN ELEMENTS

The garden doesn't need to be large or on green space. Anything helps. Repurpose pallets, tyres, and old containers of any type;

- Build a raised bed from pallets
- Secure a pallet upright and hang containers from it
- Make flowerpots from welly boots or milk containers
- Grow from vegetable scraps and waste seeds
- Include a compost heap: fantastic for learning about sustainability, soils, invertebrates, food chains etc..
- Grow climbing and trailing plants up bare walls and structural elements.
- Create a simple weather station and take records. Children can make the rain gauge and wind spinner. Have a thermometer and hygrometer but also experiment with other natural weather gauges (e.g. pinecones).

WILDLIFE (Any space helps)

- Hang bird boxes, bird feeders and bug hotels
- Create a minibeast area from logs, upturned flowerpots, spare tiles and scraps of carpet; anything they can hide under. (Ideally, place in the shade.)
- Consider a wildlife pond, however small. They can be very cheap but will need to be made safe.
- Plant native species for maximum impact and learning.

TRAILS AND INTERPRETATION

- Fix up permanent identification sheets by native species of plant; a minibeast sheet by the minibeast area; a birds sheet by the bird feeder.
- Hang or fix heavy-duty zip-lock wallets around the grounds for trails and less-permanent information. Have several colour-coded sets so different learning activities can run simultaneously. E.g. blue = maths trail; red = year 1 nature poems.

TIPS

- Involve pupils as much as possible in design and implementation: A great opportunity for interdisciplinary and cross-school working.
- Repurpose (upcycle) materials wherever possible. Put word out and you will be surprised what is available. Web search for upcycling ideas.
- Make sure to include active and quiet areas (wildlife will prefer the quiet areas too).
- Find links to grounds development ideas [here](#).
- We recommend Learning Through Landscapes' excellent [guide on safe use of grounds during Covid 19](#).



Above: Bright Horizons Early Years.

Left: Backyard Boss