



Perth Academy: A Rich Community Learning Resource

Key Facts

Where: On the south side of Perth, the school shares a campus with Oakbank Primary School and Fairview School.

School Roll: 1000 approx.

What: A dedicated Outdoor Learning Resource was built close to the main school entrance and next to the science department. As a condition of the funding, it is made available to the wider community.

Summary:

The Outdoor Learning Resource consists of a collection of two outdoor classrooms with tables and benches, a school garden, hedging, woodland planting, and a drama space. The area serves as a place to learn, a place to gather pupils who have been working outdoors elsewhere in the school grounds, and as a social space used during breaks and lunchtimes.

The outdoor classrooms can accommodate 20-30 pupils and are used by all departments. One has a canopy to shelter the seating from the rain, and at the request of teachers, a large whiteboard has been mounted outside too. To some extent, both classrooms are sheltered by the walls of the school building, but hedging and tree planting have been added to promote biodiversity and to create a wind barrier.

A triangular stage and seating area have been built – and although originally for the Drama Department, this performance area has a multi-purpose function for learning, teaching and social space. A living willow fence and archways were planted to mark out the area and to screen it from the road. Pupils worked with a sculptor to design and plant the willow after learning about the properties of the plant and researching willow sculptures around the world.

The school garden is used by many departments – home economics pupils plant and harvest herbs and vegetables, and compost waste; modern language pupils have created labels in Italian for parts of the garden; the maths department use the garden as a real life context for learning about measure;

biology have grown plants from seed to use in the garden and in containers and hanging baskets; and the technical department built the equipment shed using an ex display DIY kit. Teachers report that engagement and therefore behaviour have improved as a result of the increased use of outdoor spaces.

Education Benefit:

- Wide cross-curricular educational opportunities
- Competitions raise the profile of the resource, both within the school and wider community
- Business enterprise/fundraising opportunities through cultivation and sale of plants

Key Messages

- **Placing the Learning Resource in a very visible and easily accessed area means that pupils and adults are constantly reminded of its usefulness and availability**
- **Planning for community use, including disabled access, opens up additional funding opportunities**
- **Fundraising within the school community raises the profile of projects and helps develop a greater sense of involvement and ownership**