



NATURE - CASE STUDIES

Explore schools initiatives in Suffolk that are improving outdoor learning and connecting schools with nature

Outdoor Learning

Some schools have an area on their school grounds that they can utilise for forest school. The majority of OSOW schools offer Forest School to all their pupils across the key stages.

Schools such as **Helmingham Primary** have a dedicated forest school area. This area sits adjacent to the school grounds and is used with permission from the landowners, Helmingham Estate. It sits close to a public footpath, which the pupils regularly use for Woodland Walks.

Other schools, such as **Great Barton and Great Finborough**, have created outdoor classrooms. Sails, parasols and canopies are helpful in creating shade and enabling outdoor areas to be more amenable to outdoor learning and/or dining in the sunnier months.



Protecting nature

One issue shared by many schools with forest school areas comes as a result of their regular use: soil compaction. The footfall of the pupils who use these areas has led to some degradation of the land, largely through soil compaction and destruction of new shoots.



The impact of pupil footfall is also evident on school fields, particularly during periods of drought. This year's hot, dry weather has had an impact on grass areas, killing the grass and leading to bald spots and fine, dusty soil. One OSOW school is planning to address this problem by rotating the green areas that are accessible to pupils.



Planning, planting and partnerships

Some of the OSOW schools have worked with, or are working with, the Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Wilder Schools programme. The programme supported them in auditing their school grounds and considering the best action for nature in different areas of the school site. The programme has also delivered outdoor learning sessions: training a teacher and a class/year group in how to care for and use their newly created nature spaces. Other schools have started working with the resources on the National Education Nature Park website to help them audit their grounds and plan for future nature projects. There is interest from OSOW schools to engage with Natural England's curriculum programme, particularly the Wildlife Wise course.