

The **Playground Project:**

Designing a better
school environment



**Landscape
Institute**
Inspiring great places

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The Landscape Institute

The Landscape Institute is the Royal Chartered Institute for Landscape Architects, which includes landscape designers, landscape managers, landscape planners, landscape ecologists and urban designers.

As a professional body and educational charity, it works to protect, conserve and enhance the natural and built environment for the public benefit by promoting the arts and science of landscape architecture.

It champions landscape and the landscape profession, through advocacy and policy work, to support its members in order to inspire great places where people want to live, work and visit.

It works with the government to improve the planning, design and management of urban and rural landscapes.

It accredits university courses and promotes professional development to ensure that Chartered members of the Landscape Institute deliver the highest standards of practice.

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What is Landscape architecture?

Landscape architecture is rooted in an understanding of how the environment works and what makes each place unique. It is a creative profession where landscape architects solve complex challenges by designing, planning and managing the urban and natural environment; protecting and enhancing our most cherished landscapes and townscapes. Renowned local examples include the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and the King's Cross station re-development.

You can explore the interesting projects landscape architects work on, as well as read about the key issues they help to tackle, at

www.BeaLandscapeArchitect.com



Canary Wharf Group

Canary Wharf Group Plc has kindly supported The Playground Project this year as part of their Education and Schools programme. As part of their engagement with the local community, they work closely with a wide variety of schools in Tower Hamlets, sponsoring breakfast and after school clubs, sporting activities and giving support for children with disabilities. It is the skills and experience which local young people develop at school which will equip them to access the opportunities at Canary Wharf, whether that be getting a job on the Wharf itself, working for a company or organisation which supplies or supports Canary Wharf, or just living and working in an exciting and diverse borough like Tower Hamlets.


CANARY WHARF
GROUP PLC

About The Playground Project Competition

The Playground Project was set up to help connect landscape architecture to a younger audience. It is an educational competition to encourage you and your pupils to explore and better understand your outdoor space; working through engaging activities with a volunteer landscape architect to re-design an aspect of your playground. Working with the children to develop their ideas into a final design, the landscape architect will support you to develop the children's learning. The final design will be entered into the competition with seven other schools, with a chance for your school to win £5000 to help implement your design.

For those who do not win, the input and designs from the children is an excellent platform for you to think about implementing change in the future.

Judging panel

Each entry will be judged by a panel of landscape architects, and a representative from the Education and Schools team of Canary Wharf Group.

TopTip

This is a chance for you to raise money through fundraising activities, engaging the whole school including school governors.

TopTip

It is entirely up to you how you present your entry, so have fun with it! The key to success is to show how the children have learnt through being involved in the project and what difference implementing the scheme will make to future outdoor learning at your school.

The Playground Project Competition entry



Criteria for assessing entries

The judging team will be looking for:

- 1 Evidence of children's engagement in deciding which problem your project focused on
- 2 Evidence of curriculum delivery through the project and plans for future curriculum delivery when the project is built/planted
- 3 Clear indication of how the children's ideas have influenced the final scheme
- 4 Practicality and cost effectiveness of overall scheme
- 5 Evidence in understanding what landscape architecture is

When you have finalised your design with the children and landscape architect, you will need to submit:

- 1 **2 x A2 presentation boards/sheets** showing the children's work, evolution of ideas, and your plans for implementation. One of the boards can include models made by the children.
- 2 A completed **project information sheet; budget costs outline and evaluation form.**

Submissions should be sent to **Poppy Smith** from the Landscape Institute and more information will be provided nearer the time.

Submission deadline Friday 27 May 2016

Starting **The Playground Project** competition

Stage 1

Schools workshop

It is important to attend the school workshop session on Friday 26th February 2016 to learn about the project brief and lesson steps. The identified lead teacher for the project should attend this workshop.



Stage 2

Preliminary meeting with landscape architect

Conduct a site walk with your volunteer landscape architect and decide which area/aspect of the playground you feel needs most attention. Agree on dates for the project and which sessions the landscape architect will support on.



Stage 3

Project delivery

Deliver the six session project between March and May 2016. We have outlined the six sessions in more detail on page 6.



Stage 4

Competition submission

Schools are invited to submit their presentation boards to **The Playground Project** judging panel by Friday 27th May 2016.



Stage 5

Winner announced

The winner will be announced at the beginning of June.

Project Stages

The competition is designed for upper KS2 pupils (year 5 and 6), and works best when spread over six sessions. We recommend that your landscape architect attends for three to four of these sessions and you can hold complementary curriculum led lessons for the remaining sessions. You can choose whether this will fit into a term or half-term.

Each participating school will receive:

- £100 budget for you to resource the project. You may choose to spend some of this on model making materials and presentation boards
- The support of a qualified landscape architect who is a member of the Landscape Institute and who has volunteered their time to support the project
- DropBox folder containing a presentation about landscape architecture, the project information sheet and evaluation forms

Deciding on your competition focus

This competition will help you and the children overview your grounds and identify a key area you would like to focus on for your design. The emphasis for the competition could be a specific area of your playground which requires attention, or an issue that you would like to address. Identifying this focus may be a quick decision based on your school improvement plan, or may involve more engagement with the children.



Agree the curriculum outcomes

Your project will need to deliver key elements of the curriculum for the children taking part. Clarifying your curriculum outcomes is helpful at an early stage, and may provide focus for deciding on your project. This is also a key criterion which your submission will be assessed against to win the £5000 prize!

Examples of themes you may want to address

- There's not much wildlife in our small urban site and the seasons change without strong evidence in plants on site
- There's nowhere to sit and chat comfortably with friends in all seasons
- We would like to grow more food
- We don't have a place for the class/year/school to gather, socialise or perform
- We have recently built a new playground feature but the surrounding grounds require attention

Preliminary meeting with your landscape architect

The preliminary meeting with your landscape architect is a fantastic opportunity for you discuss the focus of your project and to agree on dates and sessions. Key things to cover in this meeting include:



- Discussing the focus of the project and any specific curriculum links you would want it to meet
- Confirming pupils/class involved
- Confirming teacher and teaching assistants involved
- Discuss with your landscape architect what activities would work best to get the most from the children, along with how behaviour should be best managed
- Agree project dates
- Confirm site plan is up to date
- £100 budget for resources. This is a good opportunity to discuss how this money could best be spent such as model making resources, plant examples
- Review the requirements of the project information sheet

Project delivery

So, how will **The Playground Project** be organised, and how will you develop your children's ideas into a final submission for the competition? The different sessions you will need to hold are detailed here. Remember that your landscape architect will be able to provide input for roughly half of these sessions.

TopTip

Remember to plan your project to allow enough time for the development of the key ideas that are required for the competition entry.

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| Session 1 Introduction to landscape architecture | <p>Introduce your class to landscape architecture as a profession and explore the variety of projects landscape architects work on and how the designs improve outdoor environments</p> <p>Activity suggestion: 'What is landscape architecture?'</p> | Teacher leading, opportunity for landscape architect to input |
| Session 2 Site visit | <p>Familiarise the children to their playground as the site they will be looking to design. With your landscape architect, go on a 'site visit' and discuss what you and the children like/dislike about the area and start thinking about what you would like to see in it and how you would like to use it.</p> <p>Activity suggestion: 'Rate your space'</p> | Teacher leading, supported by landscape architect |
| Sessions 3 & 4 Research design ideas | <p>The children will now have more of an understanding of their space and how they would like to use it; they can now start thinking about their design.</p> <p>The aspects of the curriculum you would like to cover and the focus of your design will determine the activities you choose to do. Below is a list of activity suggestions which will help you and the children to explore the variety of things landscape architects look at when designing new areas. These activities are expanded in more detail over the next few pages.</p> <p>Activity suggestion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Measure your space — Green your space — Explore your space — Test your space — Diversify your space <p>Make sure that after each activity you incorporate what was learnt into the children's design to re-focus the competition task.</p> <p>Make sure you give the children freedom in how they want to present their ideas. Think about whether it would work best in groups or individually. They can express their design ideas through writing, drawing and model making, or a mixture of all three. Your site map can provide a great starting point for the children's design.</p> | Teacher leading, supported by landscape architect |
| Session 5 Model making | <p>The £100 budget you were provided with will get you some great model making resources.</p> <p>Activity suggestion : Model your space</p> <p>Using knowledge and inspiration from previous sessions, the children can now transfer their designs into 3D models to have a better understanding of how it will work.</p> | Teacher leading, supported by landscape architect |
| Session 6 What have we learnt? What do we need to finish? | <p>This is a good open session to 'mop up'. Go back to the first session's discussion; do we now know what landscape architecture is? Why is it important? How can our space be design to meet out needs?</p> <p>Agree and prepare what will be submitted, following the submission and judging criteria. If you have any questions, please contact Poppy at the Landscape Institute.</p> | Teacher leading |

Activity suggestions

Various activity ideas are provided. These have the curriculum links outlined, to help you choose which ones you would like to use.

Please do also develop your own activities!

What is landscape architecture?

Useful for learning what landscape architecture is and the projects landscape architects work on.

Key questions

- What is landscape architecture and the history of the profession?
- What do landscape architects do?
- What projects do landscape architects work on?
- What design elements are used in projects which we like?

Activity suggestions

- Look at examples of famous landscape architects and local projects, discuss what you and the children like about the designs you've seen. Encourage the children to see that many outdoor spaces are designed by professionals such as landscape architects
- Introduce the class to think of their playground as a site that can be designed by a landscape architect. Encourage the children to pick out elements they like from the examples and to think about what they would work in their space

Involvement from your landscape architect

The landscape architect can give a short presentation of what landscape architecture is, who they are, and the work they do. This will help stimulate the children's interest and ideas for the competition

Curriculum links

KS2 curriculum "about great artists, architects and designers in history"

Outcome

You and the children will now have a better understanding of what landscape architecture is and will have begun to think about you own site and how the children would like to use it

TopTip

Did you know that landscape architects were involved in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park design? This is a great local example to use when discussing examples of projects.

Rate your space

Useful for identifying what the children think of their school grounds, and can be adapted for other decision making tasks.

Key questions

- What are your favourite/least favourite areas in the playground and why?
- How is the space used by different people (teachers, children, parents)?

Activity suggestions

- Give each child a 2 sided sheet with happy/sad faces on. At different points in the grounds, ask the children questions about the area and record their responses. The children can then follow the results up later by making a simple bar chart of responses for each zone on the site plan
- Use images of different users of the space (teachers, children, parents). Ask the children to think about how each user uses the space differently

Involvement from your landscape architect

Your landscape architect can be involved in prompting the children to think about why they like/ don't like the space, bringing in their experience of how they look at sites as a professional

Curriculum links

PSHE, literacy and numeracy, including speaking and listening, data manipulation, mapping

Outcome

The children will have a better idea about what they think of their site and the areas they want to improve. The landscape architect will be able to discuss the outcomes of this activity and link it to your design. A photo or explanation of this activity could be used on your presentation board to explain how you identified an area for improvement



TopTip

Your landscape architect could also lead a trip to a local playground or park which has been designed by a landscape architect for the children to gain inspiration for their own designs. Ask the children to assess the space and think of improvements

Measure your space

Useful for working out the dimensions of an aspect of your design such as a class gathering space or planting area.

Key questions

- What size space is needed?
- Where in the grounds should the space be located?
- What shape will the space be?
- If it is for a class gathering space, how many children do you want it to hold?
- Does it need to be on a raised deck? How high should deck be?
- Do you need fixed seating?
- If it is for planters, how many do you want, how deep do they need to be?

Activity suggestions:

- Use a variety of means to measure the area to gauge how big you want it. A good starting point is to get the children to stand in a row with their arms out at length. You can then measure out this space with your trundle wheels and meter sticks
- Follow up your measurements on the site plan to scale

Involvement from your landscape architect

Ask your landscape architect if they can bring in surveyors tape to measure large areas with you and the children

Curriculum links

Numeracy, including problem solving, space, shape, measure, drawing to scale

Outcome

The children will get a better idea of scale and shape for their designs



Explore your space

Useful for understanding the playground's microclimate to inform your design

Key questions

- What makes a place comfortable? E.g. Sunny places, windy spots, hot/cold areas
- What weather conditions do plants need to grow well?

Activity suggestions

- Get the children to identify the cardinal point of the compass. From there they can work out where the sunny sites are, and if any areas are shady at certain times of day. Chalking the compass points on the playground gives children useful practice in using a compass accurately
- Use wind spinners to test wind speed and direction. If you don't have wind spinners, tape crepe paper to the end of canes to get the same effect

Involvement from your landscape architect

Your landscape architect can help to explain why it is so important to plan and design around the microclimate e.g. sunny sites are best for growing food, and are most comfortable for sitting in spring and autumn

Curriculum links

Humanities and science, including weather, climate, microclimate, cardinal compass points

Outcome

Annotating the findings onto the site plan will help inform the children at the design stage. Photographs of the children taking part in the activity will be good to submit to the judges



Green your space

Useful for exploring different species of plants and deciding what varieties would work well for your space.

Key questions

- How do plants vary across species, with a focus on colour and texture?
- Do you want to grow food in your site?
- Where can plants grow? E.g. On walls, in planters
- Why are plants important? E.g. To enrich the character of the site, create habitats for mini-beasts, enhance the sensory experience

Activity suggestions

- Look at plants with a range of leaf shape, colour, texture, scent, size, habit and seasonality. Explore the differences and variety of the plants through: a descriptive writing piece; developing knowledge on texture and colour; learning about seasons

Involvement from your landscape architect

Ask your landscape architect if they can provide the plants for your class. They can discuss how they have used different plants for different purposes in their own projects

Curriculum links

Literacy and science, including descriptive language, story and seasonal change

Outcome

The children will have a better understanding of plants and this work can be displayed on their presentation board. This could be a creative writing piece or collage of the plants they would like in their grounds

Inhabit your space

Useful for exploring the current wildlife and habitats in the playground.

Key questions

- What wildlife is in our space already?
- What are good habitats for different animal species?
- What changes can be made to increase the amount of wildlife?

Activity suggestions

- Research the variety of animals that can be found in urban environments such as blue tit, butterfly, frog, hedgehog, spider, beetle
- Look at the basics of what animals need for food, drink and shelter. Encourage the children to explore the playground to find out where the different animals might live. You can split the children into 'animal groups' so they can work together. The children can record their findings onto the site plan. Using sticky dots can create a useful color coded map such as shelter = red, food = green, water = blue

Involvement from your landscape architect

The landscape architect can use the annotated map to help the children think about how they can increase the habitats of these animals, and what changes can be made. Make sure you keep a note of the ideas the children have so they can go back to this at the end to see if they succeeded in their ideas

- The green your space activity can also be linked to wildlife and habitats

Curriculum links

Humanities and science, including mapping and habitats

Outcome

The children will better understand the habitats and wildlife in their playground and can bring this knowledge into their design to enhance these areas. Photos of the children exploring their playground can be used on your presentation boards

TopTip

Use part of your £100 budget to order a variety of plants for the children to study.



Test your space

Useful for exploring properties of material and deciding what would work well for the children's design

Key questions

- What are the properties of the different materials?
- What are the most suitable materials for the different aspects of the design?
- How are the materials affected in different weather conditions?

Activity suggestions

- If you are designing a shelter for your space, you can test materials for shade/shelter and for degrees of rain proofing. This involves sheltering small groups of children under large sheets of various shade/shelter fabrics and spraying them with a hose



Involvement from your landscape architect

Ask your landscape architect to bring in a selection of material samples and lead a discussion about the most suitable materials for different purposes of the design. Materials might include: Perspex roofing; shade sail material; different timbers for construction; samples of metals and surface finishes; a range of paving materials, including tumbled recycled glass. The children can then choose what they want their designs to include

Curriculum links

Science, including properties of materials

Outcome

The children will make decisions about the materials to be used, and photos of the children handling the samples can be used on your presentation boards



Model your space

Useful for bringing all your design ideas together to see how it looks in 3D

Key questions

- What will your design look like in 3D?
- Are there any new ideas for the design which can be learnt through model making?

Activity suggestions

- Review the design ideas already created by the children and encourage the children to use this session as a chance to develop their ideas further
- Get the children to create a model of their designs ensuring they bring in ideas collected from other activities. This can be individually, in pairs or in groups
- Ask the children to annotate the models to show what materials/plants they have chosen
- Re-focus the children by asking them to present their model to the class and pointing out their favourite/ most challenging aspect of it. If their initial design has changed over this activity, it is good to note this and reasons why

Involvement from your landscape architect

The landscape architect will be able to help the children with their model making and can list the key ideas that were most relevant for follow up into a final design

Curriculum links

Design and technology, including materials, structures, joining

Outcomes

Depending on the scheme and ultimate budget, the best and most practical ideas will need to be agreed by the class to be put forward for the final design. How you do this will vary according to the age/ability of the children



TopTip

Remember to keep a few of the children's models to submit for your final presentation.

Model making tips

Structures: Children often find structures difficult to construct successfully because they have not had an opportunity to explore how they can stand up well. Explaining these issues can bring in other elements of the curriculum for you to explore

Scale: Scale is really important in this exercise. A good trick is to make pipe-cleaner stick figures so the children can make their model to scale

What are the models saying: During the modeling activity, it is very important to have conversations to know what the models are saying about the children's ideas as this is sometimes not clear. Sticky note annotations by adults can be helpful to capture the child's thoughts



Judging criteria

The ideas generated by modelling are then interpreted into the final design by the landscape architect and it is important that you can demonstrate to the children how their ideas have been used.

Model making resources

- You have a £100 budget to purchase materials for this project, so you can give the children expressive materials to choose from such as balsa blocks, plain lolly sticks, BBQ sticks, pipe-cleaners, mesh sheets, model makers 'vegetation', light weight fabrics that cut cleanly, natural materials such as twigs, pebbles, cobbles
- Ask children to collect twigs, leaves and other foraged goods from the playground in advance of the session
- Focus on neutral colours rather than brightly coloured resources so that colour does not distract from form. It also allows for a more realistic model to be created of their design
- Glue guns are very useful for joining materials together
- Using foam core board as a base can be helpful as you can push BBQ sticks into a double thickness of foam core if you are aiming to make posts for shelter roofs



TopTip

Shelter posts don't have to be vertical!
Angles can add dynamism to the design,
and an opportunity for mathematical
discussion

Thank you

We would like to say a warm thank you to all the schools who are taking part in **The Playground Project** this year. Although there can only be one winner, we hope that each school will have engaged their children in their playground, coming up with interesting designs. We look forward to seeing what you have come up with in June

Please remember that **The Playground Project** is a competition, and submitted entries should not be regarded as projects ready for implementation. Schools are responsible to comply with the local planning restrictions and should seek professional advice from appropriately qualified individuals at all times after **The Playground Project**

The Landscape Institute would like to thank Canary Wharf Group for supporting the project. We would also like to thank Landscapes Naturally for their input into the guidance and workshops, along with providing the images for this document

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Inspiring great places



Engaging school communities
in transforming outdoor
learning and play


CANARY WHARF
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