

## Case Study

### The Orchards School - Manchester

November 2024

Earlier this year, Twinfix was approached to help The Orchards School in Stretford to enhance its outdoor learning environment.

Catering to children with a variety of learning difficulties, the school sought a custom lean-to canopy that would support its mission of creating an inclusive and stimulating educational setting. The project involved designing, manufacturing, and installing a bespoke canopy to provide a safe and sheltered outdoor space for a range of activities, helping to meet the diverse needs of the students.

The canopy was designed to span 25 metres in length, with a 4.9 metre projection, offering substantial coverage for outdoor learning and play. Crafted from high-quality aluminium and finished in RAL 7016 (anthracite grey), the frame provided both durability and a sleek, modern appearance. To ensure safety while maximising natural light, the canopy incorporated Twinfix's Multi-Link-Panel Non-Fragile roofing system glazed with 16mm Opal polycarbonate, this system is designated as 'non-fragile in accordance to the HSE's drop test for fragility ACR[M]001:2019.

Safety was a primary concern for The Orchards School, especially given the unique requirements of a Special Educational Needs (SEN) setting. The canopy's non-fragile roof system significantly reduces risks associated with climbing, a particularly important factor in school environments. The frame's anti-climb paint adds an additional layer of deterrence, ensuring students are protected from potential hazards. Furthermore, the inclusion of post protectors enhances safety by shielding students from accidental impacts during play, while the integrated guttering system effectively channels rainwater away, keeping the play areas dry and clean even in wet weather.



The benefits of the new canopy extend beyond physical safety; the space serves as a vital area for students' development. The structure not only provides shelter but also transforms the outdoor space into a dynamic learning environment. By encouraging physical movement and offering a range of sensory experiences, the canopy supports the development of motor skills and overall health. The opportunity to engage with nature and outdoor elements such as natural light, fresh air, and varied textures and sounds enriches the learning experience, especially for students with learning difficulties.

The canopy creates a communal area where students can interact with peers in a less structured setting, fostering social skills and promoting friendships that contribute to a supportive school community. This outdoor space also facilitates experiential learning, allowing teachers to conduct lessons in a stimulating environment. For SEN students who often thrive in hands-on learning situations, the canopy offers a valuable addition to the school's educational resources.

This project highlights how thoughtful architectural solutions can make a profound difference in educational environments. By delivering a safe, robust, and visually appealing outdoor space, Twinfix not only enhances the school's infrastructure but also supports the holistic development of students with learning difficulties.



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