



Sunshine Gym
Outdoor Fitness Equipment

Buyer's Guide

for schools

Outdoor Gym Design for Primary School Settings



Sunshine Gym is the UK and world* market leader in the supply of outdoor fitness equipment to the primary school sector.

We have a specific range of outdoor gym equipment appropriately sized for users under 1.4m tall which is all aimed at getting Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils active and exercising.

In terms of how long outdoor gym equipment has been available for children in this age group, the product range is still very young. Lots of teachers are only just discovering the effectiveness of outdoor gyms in schools.

However, by reading this guide there is a strong possibility that you're already thinking about an outdoor gym for pupils. In the next few pages we hope to answer your questions - even the ones you maybe haven't thought of just yet.

**Sunshine Gym equipment is supplied in more than 80 countries worldwide under various brand names applicable in each individual country.*

Features & Benefits of a Sunshine Gym...



Outdoor gym equipment brings many benefits to users - some of the advantages are very obvious, others less so.

1

Tackling Obesity

The National Child Measurement Programme (2019/20) shows 9.9 per cent of reception age children (age 4-5) are obese, with a further 13.1 per cent overweight. At age 10-11 (year 6), 21.0 per cent are obese and 14.1 per cent overweight. An increasingly overweight generation is at risk of developing health problems, particularly later on in life. Fewer snacks and sugary drinks and reduced screen time are among the suggested solutions. But another very important factor is exercise. Sunshine Gym equipment for children is only designed to target cardiovascular activity. This aerobic exercise is all children need to keep fit and healthy. And from our experience, you don't have to ask the children to use the equipment - that is already a given.

2

Building Healthy Minds

Active bodies equal active minds. Regular physical activity can boost self esteem and mood and there is strong evidence to show exercise is associated with academic achievement in children. The UK chief medical officers recommend young people should be encouraged to be active for at least 60 minutes every day, with 30 minutes of physical activity delivered in school during active travel, break times, PE lessons, extra-curricular clubs and events. A Sunshine Gym is a fun and easy way to get children interested in - and enjoying - physical activity.

3

Integrating Social Groups

One of the slogans we use at Sunshine Gym is 'Fitness for Everybody' - that is everybody and every body. Even in primary schools, as a headteacher, trustee or school business manager, you won't need us to tell you that social groups very quickly start to form. Some will be less confident and will need encouragement to be active, others just won't keep still. However in our experience, by having an outdoor gym, these social groups will integrate. All children will make good use of the equipment during break and lunch times. You could argue that this benefit should sit at the top of the list based on the positive effect it can have.

4

Building Sports Capacity

Children will be eager to use outdoor fitness equipment. They will actively move around the different types of equipment, almost forming their own routines based on what equipment becomes available. However, more and more teachers are starting to use outdoor gym equipment as part of structured lessons or in an after-school club. Children are well aware of their parents attending exercise classes and quite enjoy having access to a class of their own, making use of equipment designed and manufactured just for them.

What are the Design Considerations?



Designing an outdoor gym for a school is very different to designing a gym in a local park for example. Different considerations have to be taken into account for each and every scenario, and our experience shows us the key factors for schools are:

1

Location

The first question has to be ‘where in the school can I locate an outdoor gym?’

There are a few considerations to take into account here depending on what you are trying to achieve. The first is to do with how accessible the gym is going to be. Will it be enclosed within a fenced off area or will it be situated on open land? The best gyms are freely accessible – a factor which contributes significantly to how well used the facility becomes. This layout encourages use at the start and end of the day, as well as during break times.

However children should always be supervised when using the equipment so if this cannot be facilitated, then a requirement to close off the gym with railings, posts or similar, may be essential. Supervision is essential to minimise the risk of any accidents so when selecting the right location, try to position the gym in an area of the playground that can be seen from many directions rather than tucked up a corner or behind a wall.

The final major consideration is playground added value – do you want to make the play area bigger by installing the gym on an area of land currently underused or unpopular with children, or will the gym act as an upgrade to the existing playground footprint? The upgrade option is very simple to carry out and we regularly install Sunshine Gym equipment in tarmac playgrounds. When installing a gym into a new area away from the main playground, always consider why that area isn't used at present. If it is a lawned area, then we have many surfacing options that can help to protect the grass or turf. However, if the area is prone to flooding and on an embankment, even with surfacing, larger scale ground improvements may be needed such as drainage before equipment can be installed. This will impact on budget and time scales.

2

Space

By space we mean the area available in the chosen location for the gym.

An important rule for us is that there must be a 1.5m clear space around the extreme measurement of each piece of equipment and to any other fixed objects such as a wall. This safety zone can overlap equipment to equipment, but we would never install equipment closer than 1.5m together. Please note that linked multi-user pieces of equipment are considered as one piece from a safety zone point of view.

3

Layout

Once you have a well-supervised area with good access and plenty of space, it is time to consider layout.

Our entire children's range is about fun, cardiovascular exercise rather than weighted strength or endurance training. Safety is the main priority so it is important to think about outdoor gym entry and exit points - where is the main flow of traffic going to come from? The best scenario is to lay the equipment in a single line with a boundary directly behind the equipment. In this case, children only really enter the gym area from the front, so all equipment can be positioned to face forward. This enables users already in the area to see other children in the gym so they can adjust their exercise in accordance with the risk of others coming too close. In the straight line format, we would always position moving equipment, especially with moving legs, in the centre of the line so again most of the traffic flows past the semi-static equipment.

The same rule can be applied to a cluster of equipment: two rows of four pieces of equipment for example. In a cluster in front of a fence or wall, users will move from the front row to access the back row. The moving equipment should therefore be fitted on the back row and semi-static equipment be placed in the front row, all still facing forward. It should be noted that it is best practice to always try and lay a gym out against a boundary, otherwise the flow of traffic is from all directions making it difficult to manage the risk. Our area managers have the experience and skill to advise and assist in finding the right layout for individual sites.

4

Number of users

An outdoor gym is a brilliant activity for break and lunch times when children can take their turn to use each of the pieces of gym equipment available.

If you are incorporating the equipment into a lesson or after school club, keeping approximately 30 pupils active and included throughout this time can still be achieved.

A perfect scenario here is to have all 30 pupils on a piece of gym equipment, but with available budgets that is rarely possible. Half that number though is very different and buying a 15-person outdoor gym is feasible. We suggest here that you either pair up the children, one exercising with the other on a stopwatch or simply counting repetitions. Even better though, is to expand the gym without adding any more equipment. This can simply be done by designating a circuit area with five pupils on star jumps, five pupils on skipping or running on the spot, with the final five on burpees or a similar exercise. All children then rotate between the gym and cardio zone exercises with the whole class working out together at the same time.

5

Surfacing

Upgrading to a safety surface can bring added value to a gym.

Options include artificial grass, wetpour, rubber bound mulch, and grass mats. A surface will add value through aesthetics, reduced maintenance, and can expand the gym area based on the exercise zones idea. It is possible to extend any artificial grass or wetpour beyond the area of the equipment to create free space. These exercise zones or even a short running track can be marked up to control the movements of the exercise groups. The possibilities here are almost endless, usually for just a small additional cost compared to only surfacing beneath the area of gym equipment.

What are our Equipment Suggestions?



Every single type of user will have their own favourite piece of gym equipment that they will tend to use more than others. In the case of our children's range of equipment, we almost have three tiers of equipment popularity.

Tier 1 - Double Health Walker & Double Slalom Skier



The Double Health Walker and Double Slalom Skier are easily the most popular equipment in every gym that we install.

Both are dual user equipment so two friends can exercise together. But they are also attractive to users because they have the greatest level of movement. We always recommend having both pieces of equipment in every single primary school gym.

Tier 2 - Sky Stepper, Rower, Arm & Pedal Bike & Horse Rider



The Sky Stepper, Rower, Arm & Pedal Bike and Horse Rider all make up the middle tier.

All four pieces have a great range of movement and are all very enjoyable for children to use. They are single-user pieces of equipment but are still a great addition to a primary education outdoor gym. A lot of the gyms we install for schools are typically made up of five or six pieces so we recommend selecting at least three items from tier two.

Tier 3 - Double Strength Challenger, Double Sit-up Bench, Leg Stretch, Balance Beams, Tai Chi Discs & Waist Twister



The best of the rest includes the Double Strength Challenger, Double Sit Up Bench, Leg Stretch, Balance Beams, Tai Chi Discs and Waist Twister.

Each offers quite unique exercises and all have one big advantage over the tier two equipment. This is because all items in tier three are multi-user equipment. The Waist Twister (three users), Tai Chi Discs (two users) and Double Sit-up Bench (two users) bring back that 'exercise with a friend' concept and helps to keep the whole class active so at least one piece from tier three is recommended.

Of course, we would want you to consider more than five or six pieces, as larger gyms have the greatest impact. By using the tier guidelines, you can go as **big as your budget will allow.**

Multi Gyms



We offer a range of multi gyms that are designed to include the most popular equipment from each of the tiers.

There are many additional advantages of a multi gym compared to individual equipment, such as a space saving footprint. Each one is designed on the popularity of the equipment, with every multi gym including tier one items combined with the favourites from tier three. A great idea is to then add a number of the individual tier two pieces to create a complete gym experience. The choice between the multi gyms and traditional individual pieces of equipment though is very much down to personal preference, but we believe a mix of both is a great combination.

Summary

Everything discussed in this guide suggests that the greatest consideration with designing an outdoor gym for primary schools is safety first. Enjoying exercise is also a big part in any design process.

We really don't need to overthink arm and leg exercises for children as young people should concentrate on cardiovascular workouts which help tackle obesity, stimulate minds and are great fun. Our experience suggests that outdoor gyms for Key Stages 1 and 2 are viewed as play equipment by the children. But the physical and mental health benefits of a controlled, safely designed range of equipment just for them makes it so much more.

Gym Package Deals

Primary School Playground Package

Suitable for up to
9 Children

Enhance children's fun on the playground, with this exciting package which combines some of our popular products.



Includes: Arm & Pedal Bicycle, Rower, Horse Rider, Double Health Walker, Tai Chi Discs

£3,929 Equipment

£1,849 Installation*

Primary School Fitness is Fun Package

Suitable for up to
10 Children

An exciting package to enhance your P.E lessons or to simply add to children's break times. Either way Primary School children will love these stations all whilst still keeping fit!



Includes: Energise Multi Gym, Rower, Sky Stepper, Arm & Pedal Bicycle, Waist Twister

£5,287 Equipment

£1,949 Installation*

Primary Ultimate Package

Suitable for up to
13 Children

Our Ultimate Package combines the Activ8 Multi Gym with four other popular pieces of equipment - something to suit everyone!



Includes: Activ8 Multi Gym, Rower, Horse Rider, Double Sit Up Bench, Sky Stepper

£6,833 Equipment

£2,562 Installation*

Primary School Performance Package

Suitable for up to
15 Children

An exciting package to enhance your P.E lessons or to simply add to children's break times. Either way Primary School children will love these stations all whilst still keeping fit!



Includes: Energise Multi Gym, Tai Chi Discs, Horse Rider, Double Sit Up Bench, Double Slalom Skier, Waist Twister, Arm & Pedal Bicycle

£6,522 Equipment

£2,350 Installation*