

A photograph of two young children, a girl and a boy, running through a grassy field. The girl is on the left, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and denim shorts, with a white flower in her hair. The boy is on the right, wearing a white polo shirt and plaid shorts, with his arms outstretched. The air is filled with many colorful, iridescent bubbles. The background is a bright, sunny outdoor setting with green grass and some small flowers. The overall mood is joyful and carefree.

Children's Outdoor Play and Learning: Making the most of the outdoors

Never underestimate the importance of your outdoor play and learning environment. It can create a unique selling point, helping you sell available childcare places to prospective parents, thus improving occupancy and in turn revenues and profit. In addition, when you decide it's time to sell your business, your outdoor learning environment could be a key attraction to potential buyers.

It's often so easy to overlook the little things which can make a good business great – outdoor areas are one of those key areas that are frequently overlooked.

Our Childcare & Education team visit over 1,000 nurseries each year, and when it comes to outdoor play and learning areas we've seen the good, the bad and the ugly!

HERE ARE OUR TOP TIPS TO MAKE YOUR OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD:

- 1.** First and foremost, your outdoor space should be safe. It's imperative to think about the mitigation of risks including: fall hazards around climbing equipment, ground surfacing, and understand your plants, ensuring you avoid highly poisonous and dangerous ones.
- 2.** Make the most of the space you have - be that large or small
- 3.** Understand the spatial constraints of your outdoor space – plan and design your outdoor environment to maximise its utilisation
- 4.** Create spaces for as wide a range of activities as possible – spaces should include both active spaces using fixed or freestanding equipment, and quiet spaces, such as vegetable planting areas or story time corners
- 5.** Ensure equipment is age appropriate, in good condition, regularly checked and replaced when necessary
- 6.** Create challenge areas which might include large outdoor puzzles, encouraging both physical activity and problem solving
- 7.** Don't forget about storage - having easily accessible storage to tidy away resources helps everyone
- 8.** Sheltered areas allow the garden to be used all year round
- 9.** Low level outdoor sinks for hand washing can also be handy for water play
- 10.** Make your outdoor space appealing to your inner child. Exciting adventures, along with imaginative and engaging equipment and designs will not only look fun and appealing to children, but parents will see an exhilarating space for their children to explore

Some of our favourite and indeed the most memorable gardens that we have visited have included: homemade mud-kitchens, bug houses made from pallets, sensory gardens, music areas, sand and water play zones, dens, willow playhouses, number and treasure hunt challenges, story time centres and large laurel mazes. We have also seen a wide array of children's animal petting areas, from rabbits to micropigs (and often they were not that micro!), to fully fledged farms, overseen by the children's farm manager in conjunction with the nursery manager.

No matter how large or small your outdoor space, or how large or small your budget, stand back with a fresh pair of eyes and never underestimate the importance of your outdoor play and learning environment.

Christie & Co is a leading specialist business property adviser, providing brokerage, professional and consultancy advice to our sectors for over 80 years.

We have 30 offices across the UK and Europe, and a dedicated Asia desk, so whether you wish to buy, sell or grow your childcare or education business, our team of experienced advisors and agents can help you realise your ambitions.



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