

School grounds in the UK: Area and land cover classification

Across the UK school grounds cover an area of just over 61,000 hectares. This is the equivalent to:

- a new National Park the size of Exmoor, New Forest, or Pembrokeshire Coast; or
- the area of Birmingham, Cardiff, Belfast, and Glasgow combined.

By home nation, this breaks down as:

- **England:** 52,000 hectares, the equivalent of the cities of Birmingham, Sheffield, and Newcastle combined.
- **Scotland:** 4,750 hectares, which is equivalent to the area of Dundee City.
- **Wales:** 2,660 hectares, larger than the city of Newport.
- **Northern Ireland:** 1,620 hectares, larger than Belfast city.

Land cover in school grounds

School grounds are composed of just over 84% built-up areas and improved (maintained) grassland. Nearly 9% is formal horticulture such as gardens for food, formal school entrances, or planted formal gardens. Just 3% is woodland or heath. The remaining 4% is composed of a diversity of habitats.

Broad Land Cover Class	%
Built up areas and gardens (buildings, hard surfacing including tarmac and artificial grass, formal garden areas)	45.85%
Improved grassland (maintained grass e.g. sports pitch)	38.65%
Arable and horticulture (managed growing for food or appearance)	8.96%
Rough low-productivity grassland (low or no maintenance grassland)	2.40%
Broad leaved, mixed and yew woodland	2.41%
Neutral grassland (semi-improved or semi-maintained)	0.50%
Coniferous woodland	0.43%
Inland rock	0.36%
Dwarf shrub heath	0.23%
Freshwater	0.06%
Supra-littoral sediment	0.05%
Acid grassland	0.03%
Calcareous grassland	0.02%
Bog	0.01%

All references: [UK School Grounds Land Cover Classifications \(2019\)](#), Field Studies Council.
Data from Open Street Map POI areas and Land Cover Classification from LCM 2007 Vector data set.