Funders for schools

This is a list of potential funders for schools' outdoor learning and play projects. Please use this as a guide and undertake your own research into the current priorities of these funders, the suitability of the funding to your project, and any relevant deadlines.

UK wide

UK Community Foundations
There are 47 accredited community foundations across the UK offering grants to bring together local people and organisations that want to improve their communities. Details for your local Community Foundation can be found at the link above and their website will provide a list of all current local funding opportunities.
Grant size varies

John Lewis Community Matters
Good causes in the community local to John Lewis/Waitrose stores
Approx £1,000 (£3,000 split between 3 groups based on customer token vote)

The Royal Society Partnership Grants: Tomorrow's climate scientists
Investigative partnership projects between schools and STEM professionals (from academia or industry) which give students a voice and an opportunity to take action to address climate and biodiversity issues. Deadlines April, June and November. To help teachers and STEM partners with the application, free online training sessions are provided.
Up to £3,000

OurEcho Challenge
Grants for young people (ages 13-16) to identify threats to local ecosystems and then propose solutions to help preserve, protect or restore those natural resources.
Up to £5,000

Tesco and Groundwork Stronger Starts
Open to all schools with a priority for projects that provide food and support to young people's mental and physical wellbeing (e.g. equipment for outdoor activities, developing a good growing area). Every three months, three local good causes are selected to be in the blue token customer vote in Tesco stores throughout the UK.
Up to £1,500

Ernest Cook Trust: Outdoor Essentials Grant

Awarded to UK state-funded primary and secondary schools to help get their pupils learning outdoors. Each round targets specific geographical areas and stages (detailed on their website). Grants available for Nature & Nurture (school grounds improvements), Transport & Travel (transport costs to outdoor learning venues), or Wellies & Waterproofs (outdoor clothing).
£500 grants for primary or special schools, £1,000 grants for secondary schools

OVO Foundation Nature Prize
Annual grants for school projects which inspire climate action through a connection to nature. Usually open for applications in October each year.
£200-£1,000

The Nineveh Trust
Grants for horticultural education, wildlife gardens, forest schools etc.
Up to £10,000

Linnean Society – Our Local Nature Grant
Provides grants for young people-led projects to affect positive change to local nature and natural spaces. Usually open for applications between August and October.
£150-£1,000

Bupa Foundation and Groundwork Green Community Grants
Grants for projects which focus on the regeneration of green spaces in cities for community use, such as; tree planting to improve air quality and biodiversity, the creation of an outdoor classroom or 'forest school', or establishing a community allotment or garden. Usually open for applications in June each year.
Up to £2,000

Earthwatch Green Earth Schools
Earthwatch collaborate with schools to create the optimal nature features for their grounds to support outdoor learning, along with citizen science-based resource and activity packs that link to national curriculums and training for teachers to build their skills and confidence in leading outdoor and environmental learning.
Grant in the form of equipment & expertise

IKEA x Let's Go Zero Competition
Winning schools awarded one of three sustainability product bundles: materials to create a swap shop, an outdoor learning area, or an indoor sustainability hub for learning about climate issues. Usually open for applications in January each year.
Product bundle worth £1,500

Outdoor Guide Foundation
State-funded primary schools across the UK can nominate themselves to receive discounted or free outdoor clothing and welly sets.
Grant in the form of equipment

B&Q Community re-use
Donates products including paint, pallets, plastic plant pots and trays, and plants that are past their best to schools.
Grant in the form of equipment

Great Britain

Learning through Landscapes' Local School Nature Grants
£500 of outdoor equipment chosen from a catalogue of over 100 items plus a climate education kit, a school grounds climate audit and staff training.
Grant in the form of equipment and training

England

National Lottery Community Fund Awards for All - England
Funding for communities to take action on the things that matter to them. Will fund school projects, as long as the project benefits and involves the communities around the school.
£300-£20,000

National Education Nature Park
Grants funded by the Department for Education are available to selected education settings to help children and young people connect with nature through their school, nursery or college. Eligible settings will be contacted by Royal Horticultural Society delivery partners.
Up to £10,000

Edina Trust: Science Grants for Schools
Eligible areas for 2024-25 school year: Liverpool, Halton, Blackburn, Manchester
Grants for primary and early years. Schools can use their grants for science equipment, gardening equipment, science weeks, science subscriptions, science visits (in or out of school) and improving school grounds for science. Grants are non-competitive and available in a local authority for three years, after which they move on to new areas.
£800 for primary schools and special schools, £550 for early years settings

Ford Britain Trust
Projects in communities close to Essex (incl. East London), Southampton, Daventry, Manchester and Liverpool
Projects focusing on education, the environment, children, those with disabilities, youth activities and projects that provide clear benefits to local communities.
Don't fund major building works but do fund equipment, refurbishment etc.
Small grants up to £250, large grants up to £3,000

The BlueSpark Foundation
Supports education and development of children and young people. Value academic, vocational, artistic, outdoor and sporting projects but are especially keen

on projects which enhance self-confidence, team working skills and future employability of children and young people. Do not fund construction, maintenance or repair of buildings or facilities.
Average grant £1,500

Alice McCosh Trust
Grants assisting with study related to natural history and/or the environment – e.g. materials, educational visits or activities to encourage people to engage with the environment and take action to protect it. Applications open in October each year.
£1,000

The Country Trust: Farm in a Box
Resources for hands-on tried and tested activities for KS1 and KS2, designed to open the door to the world of food, farming and the countryside and support children to connect with their environment and the food they eat. Schools with more than 25.9% Free School Meal eligibility can apply (except South West England)
Grants in the form of resources/equipment

Scotland

National Lottery Community Fund Awards for All - Scotland
Funding for communities to take action on the things that matter to them. Will fund school projects, as long as the project benefits and involves the communities around the school.
£300-£20,000

Foundation Scotland Funds
Wide range of funds for different areas of the country, including some specifically focusing on education.
Grants up to £75,000, most around £5,000

Alice McCosh Trust
Grants assisting with study related to natural history and/or the environment – e.g. materials, educational visits or activities to encourage people to engage with the environment and take action to protect it. Applications open in October each year.
£1,000

Edina Trust: Science Grants for Schools
Eligible area for 2024-25 school year: Glasgow
Grants for primary and early years. Schools can use their grants for science resources, gardening equipment, science weeks, science subscriptions, science visits (in or out of school) and improving school grounds for science. Grants are non-competitive and available in a local authority for three years, after which they move on to new areas.
£800 for primary schools and special schools, £550 for early years settings

Wales

National Lottery Community Fund Awards for All - Wales
Funding for communities to take action on the things that matter to them. Will fund school projects, as long as the project benefits and involves the communities around the school.
£300-£20,000

Ford Britain Trust
Projects in communities close to Bridgend
Projects focusing on education, the environment, children, those with disabilities, youth activities and projects that provide clear benefits to local communities.
Don't fund major building works but do fund equipment, refurbishment etc.
Small grants up to £250, large grants up to £3,000

Edina Trust: Science Grants for Schools
Eligible areas for 2024-25 school year: Denbighshire, Newport and Torfaen
Grants for primary and early years. Schools can use their grants for science resources, gardening equipment, science weeks, science subscriptions, science visits (in or out of school) and improving school grounds for science. Grants are non-competitive and available in a local authority for three years, after which they move on to new areas.
£800 for primary schools and special schools, £550 for early years settings

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Grants in the form of resources/equipment

Northern Ireland

National Lottery Community Fund Awards for All – Northern Ireland
Funding for communities to take action on the things that matter to them. Will fund school projects, as long as the project benefits and involves the communities around the school.
£300-£20,000

Edina Trust: Science Grants for Schools
Eligible areas for 2024-25 school year: Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon
Grants for primary and early years. Schools can use their grants for science resources, gardening equipment, science weeks, science subscriptions, science visits (in or out of school) and improving school grounds for science. Grants are non-competitive and available in a local authority for three years, after which they move on to new areas.
£800 for primary schools and special schools, £550 for early years settings

Special Schools

The Ironmongers' Company
Grants for educational projects developing learning, motivation and skills in disadvantaged children and young people (including those with special educational needs.) Only fund schools if they are also a registered charity for children/young people with disabilities.
Grants up to £10,000

The Royal Society Partnership Grants: SEND
Primary and secondary schools can apply for funding to support investigative projects working with STEM partners that are specifically tailored for students with SEND. Grants can be used to purchase equipment for projects in science, mathematics, engineering or computing.
Up to £3,000

Trees and hedgerows

The Conservation Volunteers
Free native tree packs for communities and schools, including fruit tree packs for schools to create mini fruit orchards. They pause applications from time to time to manage demand.

International Tree Foundation: Community Tree Planting Grants
Support UK community groups to achieve their tree-planting ambitions, from community woodlands/orchards to landscape restoration or rewilding. Grant application process opens in summer and closes in December.
Equivalent to £1.95 per tree

England Woodland Creation Offer
Funding to support the creation of new woodland, including through natural colonisation. Open for settings with at least one hectare (can be a joint application with other land managers).
Up to £10,200 per hectare

Woodland Trust – Free Trees for Schools and Communities
Free tree packs – can choose from various options including Hedge, Wild Harvest, Year-Round Colour and Wildlife. Deliveries twice a year, in March and November. Applications for each round open while stocks last.

Tree Council – Orchards for Schools
Provides a free back of fruit-bearing, wildlife-enhancing, carbon-storing orchard or fruiting hedgerow. Opens for applications in the Autumn term.

Tree Council – Young Tree Champions
Free tree and/or hedgerow packs, a free tech bundle including a microscope camera, online and in-person training and support for staff, free in-school workshops for pupils. 1 application round each year during the summer.

Tree Council – Branching Out Fund
Grants to support tree and hedgerow planting projects. Open for applications annually, usually in the spring.
£250-£2,500

Gifts in kind or at cost price

Find out if any local companies can provide any of the resources you need either at cost price or even for free as they will help any money you do raise go further. Make sure you note down the value of these gifts as you may be able to use this to help you as you apply for grants. Grant givers often like to see that you are also making a financial contribution to the project and the value of these gifts can help towards this amount.

Gift may also come from parents, carers or other community members. These don't have to be large (they could include packets of seeds, wellington boots that a child has grown out of) but they can all help towards your goals.

Volunteer time

Volunteer time can also have a value so check with the grant provider to see if they accept this as 'match funding' (that bit of funding they want you to commit to) and if they have a set value for this.