

## Tor Bridge High



### At a glance

#### Location

Tor Bridge High  
Plymouth, England

#### The challenge

To provide an innovative science facility that allows both staff and students to break out of the traditional classroom and engage with local community.

#### The solution

SOLARDOME<sup>®</sup> Paradise

#### Dome specification

|          |                                       |
|----------|---------------------------------------|
| Diameter | 10.1m / 33' 3"                        |
| Height   | 5.2m / 17' 1"                         |
| Area     | 77m <sup>2</sup> / 829ft <sup>2</sup> |

**At Tor Bridge High, science teaching is breaking out of the traditional laboratory classroom, thanks to a diverse new outdoor learning environment with a Solardome glasshouse at its heart.**

This large secondary school in Plymouth is one of just six UK schools to have had their science centre completely rebuilt as part of an intriguing research project. Commissioned in 2006/7, Project Faraday's remit was to radically rethink how science is taught in schools and develop exemplar designs or new science facilities.

All six Faraday schools wanted to diversify the learning environments and create a family of settings that maximised the use of outdoor space. For Tor Bridge High, this involved creating a science garden with a SOLARDOME<sup>®</sup> Paradise outdoor classroom as its central feature.

#### Taking science outdoors

This geodesic dome blurs the boundaries between indoors and out, creating an all-weather learning space that's both inspiring and versatile. Measuring 77m<sup>2</sup>, it is big enough to accommodate up to 68 pupils, or two classes. The school has maximised

this space further by building a mezzanine that teachers use to grow plants for practicals and long-running experiments; downstairs, the space houses workbenches, a store cupboard and permanent raised planters.

Students grow an impressive range of plants including vegetables, fruits and carnivorous plants. The produce is sold, with proceeds reinvested in the garden area. The space is fully Wi-Fi connected with electrical sockets and adjustable lighting.

### Every student benefits

The benefits for horticultural science students are obvious, but all students get the opportunity to use the dome to support their curriculum learning. Year 7 students coming into the school can join a 'garden gang' that maintains the dome and garden at lunchtimes. Pupils from the primary and special schools that share the same site also get to use the Solardome outdoor classroom regularly.

The redesign has allowed both staff and students to break out of the traditional classroom and enable innovative ways of practical learning. But its benefits extend even further, opening up new avenues for connecting with the outside world. "Our future plans for the dome include involving the local community"



explains Alan Carthy, Senior Science Technician, "for example, gardening clubs and retired people who have a relevant area of expertise who wish to share their knowledge with our students."

In other words, as students are exploring outside, locals are venturing in. If the original objective was to break down boundaries, Tor Bridge High is outperforming.

### More information

Discover how you can make the most of the space at your school by calling us for a brochure today.

