

# EDUQ&A

## DOME OUTDOOR CLASSROOMS AND BUILDINGS

**MD PIPPA BAILY DISCUSSES THE EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS OF THE LATEST ADDITION TO SOLARDOME INDUSTRIES' RANGE OF GEODESIC DOMES**

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### **TS Why should schools consider Solardome when looking at ways to encourage innovative learning outside the classroom?**

**PB** Where to begin? All of our outdoor classrooms are geodesic domes, and there are so many advantages to this design. For one thing, you get 360 views, loads of natural light and the circular layout is great for group work. Perhaps the biggest draw is that it allows pupils to be outside and yet inside, protected from the elements – and our customers tell us the children love them, they're inspiring spaces in which to teach and learn. From a practical perspective, our geodesic domes need minimal foundations so you can position them on a rooftop, courtyard, playground or 'dead space'. They're also extremely energy-efficient, low maintenance and with low lifetime costs.

### **What is unique about your range of geodesic dome outdoor classrooms?**

It's all in the shape. Our geodesic domes allow for much more visibility than a traditional wooden or walled outdoor classroom – and the aluminium framed design means they're stronger, more stable and built to last. You also get a good amount of height and floor space since there are no support structures within the dome itself – ideal for hosting a whole class. But most of all, a geodesic dome has real 'wow factor' that inspires students and staff alike.

### **What does your new innovation, the SOLARDOME PRO architectural system, enable you to offer schools?**

In a word, choice. With the SOLARDOME PRO, a school can design exactly the kind of space they want, in the materials they want. So, you could install a skylight over a courtyard space, or design a dome adjoining another building – or have it as a standalone space. You can think big and install a dome as a hall or theatre space, and even incorporate mezzanines or extra floors within it. Flexible cladding options like double or triple glazing and insulated panels mean you can make your dome design unique – and fully temperature-controlled. It's a breakthrough innovation and the sky really is the limit.

### **Can you tell us about a school where a SOLARDOME PRO dome has already been installed? How is it changing teaching and learning?**

Watford Grammar School for Girls opened their SOLARDOME PRO science lab in autumn this year. The PRO dome extension is located on the rooftop of the school's science building, it is fully equipped with workstations for up to 12 students. The school chose the PRO dome because it wanted to create a unique space that would "bring science alive for students" and encourage them to continue to study science subjects through to A-Level and beyond. The dome functions as a multi-research facility, used primarily for small group work and science-based projects that might take considerably longer than the normal timetabled science sessions. This gives students a 'taste' of what it's like to study at university – something we've found schools increasingly want to offer their students.

### **What other ways are schools finding to use a geodesic dome?**

Schools across the UK are using both our outdoor classrooms and our dome buildings as performance and exhibition spaces, STEM classrooms, standalone dining halls, mini-Eden projects for studying plants... and a mix of any and all of the above!



### **Do you have any advice for schools keen on having a dome, but concerned about its impact on the budget?**

That's a fair concern to have. Rest assured we have a range of domes to suit different budgets, uses and number of pupils. Also, there's actually a huge range of school funding opportunities out there and we've supported many schools through their successful funding applications. To start with, we offer a free, no obligation site visit to talk through the options. From there, we can offer a design service to show what the dome would look like in the school grounds, technical specification documents, and more – all free of charge. All of this material supports your application and helps your stakeholders and grant providers visualise the dome.

**Call us now on 023 8066 7890 to arrange a site visit or to visit a dome near you. Find out more at [www.solardome.co.uk/education](http://www.solardome.co.uk/education)**

