

The original Bowdon Church School, near Altrincham, Cheshire, just couldn't cope with its increasing numbers of pupils and a brand new two-story building with the same footprint area as the previous school has recently been built on what was once the playing field. Charles Shorland of architects Bowker Sadler of Stockport incorporated two Twinfix canopies into the design and Twinfix worked closely in collaboration with main contractor Willmott Dixon to fulfill their part of the project.

Manufactured from rust-resistant aluminium powder coated to RAL 7037 matt Dust Grey both of these free-standing canopies were fitted with Multi-Link-Panel roofs glazed with 25mm multiwall polycarbonate. The 25mm product was specified as its complex internal 'X' structure helps to deaden the drumming noise sometimes heard when heavy rain falls on to thinner multiwall. The panels conform to the HSE's recommended drop test for fragility ACR[M]001:2014 with a B designation, meaning they are classified as non-fragile. The two canopies were fitted adjacent to the Reception classrooms on one side of the building and to the Year One classrooms on the southern side.

The Willmott Dixon team prepared the canopy footings and one of the Twinfix in-house installation teams installed the canopies. Andy Slater, the Willmott Dixon Building Manager says "I've been delighted with the service received by Twinfix from start to finish. Their installers were brilliant!"

The project originally started out as one small canopy adjacent to the Reception classes but the school team decided at quite a late stage in the build that they wanted to enlarge this both in width and length, add on the facility to enclose part of it and also requested a similar style of canopy on the other side of the building next to their infant classes. The Twinfix team of Nick Featherstone, Sales, and Tom Bray, Project Office Manager, worked directly with architect Charles Shorland and the Willmott Dixon Building Manager Darrell Cullen to achieve the required changes within the rather short timeframe left of the build.

The result is two large canopies that provide shelter for a range of work and play activities. The Reception canopy measures 30m in total length and 3.5m in width. It consists of nine bays, each of which is 3.3m wide. The middle four bays have vertical glazing at both ends using 16mm multiwall polycarbonate to create one big space that is fitted with four electrically operated roller shutters along the front. These also have manual over-rides in case of power cuts. With the shutters down there is now a huge protected area of over 46 square metres for indoor-outdoor play for use when the weather is bad. The higher slats on the roller shutters are perforated to allow light in, with the lower slats being solid metal to prevent dirt splashing into the area when it rains. This lockable area also creates secure storage for the play equipment when the school is closed.

The Year One canopy is 3.4m deep and nearly 23.5m long. It has six bays, five of which are 3.9m wide, with the first one being slightly smaller. The middle two bays are fitted out as a secure play and storage area, similar to the other canopy.

Both structures incorporate the Twinfix aluminium rainwater system, also powder coated in RAL 7037. The downpipes of this system were specially designed so that they fit closely to the canopy posts, meaning it is difficult for small fingers to gain any purchase and are therefore discouraged from attempting to climb up said posts!

Once the old single story school is demolished pupils at Bowdon Church School will be able to access their new playing field; until then they will no doubt find their two canopies are favourite places to play and congregate whatever the weather.

