



partnerships for schools
building schools for the future

This case study looks at the design of the first 'schools-within-a-school' learning environment to be delivered as part of Bristol's BSF scheme.

Brislington Enterprise College was Highly Commended in the 'Best design for a new school' category of the *Excellence in BSF Awards 2008*.

Key project information

School: Brislington Enterprise College
Delivered by: Bristol LEP
Designed by: FLACQ Architects in collaboration with Wilkinson Eyre Architects
School type: New build, schools-within-a-school model
Opened: September 2008

Designing for new models of learning: Brislington Enterprise College

Project description

Brislington Enterprise College (BEC) is one of four schools in the first wave of the Bristol BSF scheme. Opening in September 2008, it was the first 'schools-within-a-school' model learning environment to be delivered as part of the BSF programme nationally.

Key design aspects

At the core of the design for Brislington Enterprise College lies the replacement of a single large school housed in 1950s buildings with a series of seven 'learning communities' or mini-schools, including one for students with physical impairments.

The provision of smaller teaching areas, breakout areas and other spaces has helped BEC to introduce 'learning families'. In place of large tutor groups, students are organised in families of around 10, led by a learning guide with whom they meet for 10 minutes every day. The individual learning communities have their own external areas that can be used as outdoor teaching spaces.

There are separate, clearly defined entrances for students, young people with special needs and visitors. Each of the self-contained learning communities is identified by its own colour scheme and named after a member of the big cat family (Jaguar, Panther, Cougar, etc).

Passive supervision of internal spaces helps students feel safe: there are clear sight lines from fully-glazed staff work spaces that overlook the 'street' and each learning community. Toilets are open plan and unisex, reducing the potential for bullying, which was identified by everyone during the design phase as an area of concern.

Lynx, the special needs school within BEC, has been designed as an integral part of the main school while retaining the privacy and security needed by its students.

The flexibility of the design enables the building to be reconfigured to meet future needs. Dividing partitions between some classrooms allow for the creation of larger spaces for learning and other uses. This is also

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true with the dance studio and multi-use sports space. In addition, the assembly space has retractable bleachers to enable it to also be used as a large performance space.

Consultation

All adults involved in BEC – management team, teaching and support staff and governors – contributed to the design while, in parallel, preparing to introduce human scale education, a new model for which the school has been purpose-built.

BEC appointed its Assistant Head as project manager and he worked closely with the teaching staff, LEP, Skanska and design team on details of the new building. Staff input was crucial to effective design. For example, at the request of its staff the special needs school was sited next to the shared arts, dance and music facilities, as these are particularly important for students with special needs.

FLACQ held presentations to the community from the early stages; it also held presentations for students in the various age groups and design workshops with staff at different levels.

Sustainability

BEC is built to a BREEAM “Very Good” standard – it’s designed to emit less than 3kg/m² carbon dioxide, 40% below the required standard. Also, the building is constructed from between 17-24% recycled material, which outperforms the Waste and Resources Action Programme’s (WRAP) target of 10%.

Highly efficient lighting and control systems reduce electricity use.

The building uses the structure’s thermal mass to stabilise temperatures, reducing energy requirements.

High levels of daylight are provided through the façade and roof-lights, and highly efficient lighting and sensor control systems are used to further reduce energy use.

Heating and hot water are supplied by a biomass boiler burning wood chip from a nearby forest.

Rainwater is recycled to flush all toilets. In addition, extensive use of solenoid valves control and monitor water flow in toilet areas.

Sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDs) have been incorporated within the school’s grounds, as well as porous surfacing in parking bays and all-weather pitches, all to reduce run-off into local watercourses.

The ecological value of the land has been enhanced with native plants and species-rich grasslands that will encourage local biodiversity.

Key contact

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Further information

For the latest news about BSF in Bristol and the activities of Bristol’s Local Education Partnership (LEP) see: www.bristollep.co.uk/