



partnerships for schools

building schools for the future

This case study looks at how students from Allerton High School and members of the local community gave their views on the new learning environment.

The school is now open and its facilities are used by local residents throughout the school day and into the evening and weekends.

### Key project information

**School:** Allerton High School

**No. of pupils:** 1,103 aged 11 -18

**Specialism:** Business and Enterprise

**Building cost:** Approx £31m

**School open:** September 2008

**Local authority:** Leeds

## Working with students and the community: Allerton High School, Leeds

### Project description

Of paramount importance to Allerton High's BSF project was the student experience. The school knew its students would be learning in a state-of-the-art environment, fully equipped with ICT, and in a flexible learning arrangement.

They were also aware they were building a complex mix of learning and administration areas which needed to be adaptable to the school's future changing needs.

Moving from an established and traditional build – first created in 1939 on the King Lane site, designed for 400 girls – to a 21st century learning environment has been a steep learning curve for all involved.

### Student engagement

Students from Allerton High researched many new school buildings as part of the preparatory work for creating their new accommodation, looking at

inspirational learning environments both in Britain and further afield. This research made students aware of successful, and less successful, completed projects and helped to ensure that they kept up to date with changing technologies and design issues.

Allerton High has a strong vision for learning – “enabling young people to achieve success” – and has a deep foundation in academic success. However, the new accommodation celebrates learning and achievement for all, and as such there is a wide range of sporting facilities for students; there are external learning spaces; there is a large Learning Resource area; there are many different “break-out” spaces across all of the learning pods; and we have a unique Multi-Faith Centre, which has been designed to accommodate followers of five main faiths.

The school's active Student Council, comprising members from every year, continues to play a role in gathering and disseminating the views of their peers. Members have been particularly keen to identify and

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implement ways to keep Allerton High School looking new, and to encourage students, teachers and other staff to reduce, re-use and recycle.

## Community engagement

Throughout the building project Allerton High has also sought views and opinions from staff and members of the community, as they were conscious of the school's place in the local neighbourhood.

As part of the Alwoodley Extended Services cluster, the school has been keen to ensure that local families and community members will have access to the new facilities. The challenge has been to ensure that their new school environment delivers real, shared value to all who work and learn in it, and to the community who live nearby.

Mindful of its relationships with families as well as local residents, the school ensured that it had regular dialogue with them and to listened to their views and concerns. Recurring themes were, not surprisingly, about traffic, parking and congestion around the school, and also about the change of starting/ending times of the school day and the impact this would have to family routines. Partly in response to concerns about the earlier finish to the school day, Allerton High School now offers an impressive - and well-used - array of after-school clubs, ranging from sports and arts through to extra help with class work and access to computing facilities for homework.

Allerton High School has a strong tradition of community links and looks forward to demonstrating this in their new building with busy community use of their facilities each evening and weekend.

## Key contact

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## Further information

Students and staff from Allerton High School shared their first impressions of their new learning environment in a film, which is available in the BSF Voices section of the PfS website:  
[www.partnershipsforschools.org.uk/library/bsf\\_voices\\_allerton\\_high.jsp](http://www.partnershipsforschools.org.uk/library/bsf_voices_allerton_high.jsp)

For more information about the school and Education Leeds:  
[www.allertonhigh.leeds.sch.uk/](http://www.allertonhigh.leeds.sch.uk/)  
[www.educationleeds.co.uk/bsf/](http://www.educationleeds.co.uk/bsf/)

Community use of ICT facilities and skills workshops have been very popular and proved to be an important way to reach out to the community by offering more than just an invitation to 'look around'. Staff say that the presence of local residents in the building during the school day has had a positive impact on students who are able to see that learning and education doesn't stop when you leave school; and residents have been impressed by the facilities as well as by the look and feel of the new learning environment - and the fact that school offers stylish dining and coffee bar options.

## The finished school and its facilities

Allerton's new school has facilities that both include and reflect the community that the school serves, such as one of the first multi-faith centres to be delivered through BSF.

The school, which has a specialism in Business and Enterprise, features clusters of faculty-based teaching rooms known as pods, each with large break-out spaces where students can work alone or in groups. This allows there to be fewer classrooms than a traditional faculty layout, and encourages independent learning. Bendy walls can be taken down to provide larger teaching spaces. The pods are all connected through a street that runs through the school to allow community access to all the facilities including the amphitheatre.

The school has specialist facilities to support inclusion of pupils on the autism spectrum, working in partnership with the North West SILC to develop resource provision for children with speech and language difficulties and working in partnership with the NHS.