PEB Exchange, Programme on Educational Building 2005/05

'Joinedupdesignforschools' in the United Kingdom

OECD

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OECD

PEB Exchange Programme on Educational Building

A primary school for 800 pupils equipped with an auditorium, a canteen, a small gym and an indoor stadium

The construction cost of the Intelligent Educational Training Station is approximately EUR 1 000 per square metre.

All components of the IETS project are state-of-the-art, and special attention is given to the role of school buildings in local disaster management policy.

The IETS project has recently been tested in the planning of building programmes in several Italian towns.

The term "station" was chosen for this project to emphasise the primary role that educational architecture must play: enable the school to act as a centre within its local community and to serve as a point of exchange for the larger, permanent educational network.

For further information, consult the Web site:
www.n2d.it/isb
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JOINEDUPDESIGN-FORSCHOOLS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

> "The problem was, there was too much concrete, it was dull, boring and uninviting. I was amazed when I saw all this. Now, when I see kids playing here and having fun, I think, I did something to make this happen. I feel proud."
>
> *14-year-old client team member, Islington Green School*

Outdoor social space project

Joinedupdesignforschools explores how good design can improve the quality of life in schools by listening to the voices of the clients: pupils. The programme is an initiative in the United Kingdom that joins client teams of pupils with the country's leading design practices to provide solutions for practical improvements in schools, to highlight the benefits of a close partnership between the design industry and schools, and to develop pupils' life skills.

The scheme has proved an immensely valuable research exercise, identifying common issues that pupils have with their schools. These range from the need for dedicated social space and inspiring learning areas to civilised dining spaces, safe, vandal-proof toilets, and modern, comfortable school uniforms.

The programme was created by The Sorrell Foundation. John Sorrell, a co-founder, presented joinedupdesign-forschools at the PEB conference "Creating 21st Century Learning Environments" in London in 2004. "Children are the consumers of education. They know what's good and bad about the design of their schools. So we need to listen to them and listen hard. Then, we stand a chance

of designing better schools for the future", says John Sorrell.

A pilot with seven schools took place in 2000/01, and in 2002 the Department for Education and Skills provided funding support to extend the initiative to 100 schools over a three-year programme. To date, nearly 700 pupils from over 60 schools have been directly involved, along with 172 teachers and 53 design practices.

The process

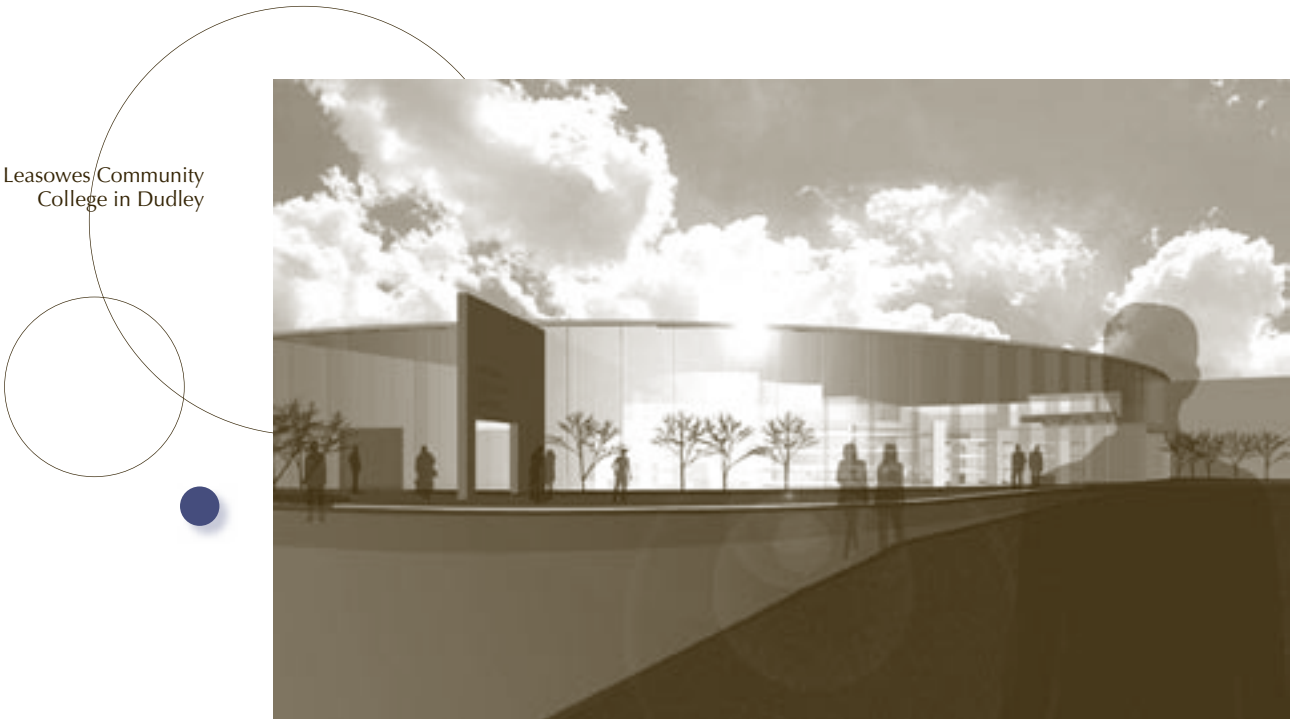
The process for joinedupdesignforschools has been continuously refined as the programme has developed. First there is planning and preparation, which includes selecting schools, meeting headteachers and developing the database of designers. The headteachers select the client teams, 10-15 pupils per team, and the relationship with the teams begins with an explanation of the project in workshops and brainstorming sessions. The client teams are then introduced to a four-stage process, which runs between September and June:

1. Challenge: The client team of pupils identify a problem they would like a designer to solve.
2. Brief: The brief is then created by the pupils and is presented to the designer appointed to work for them.
3. Conversation: Over the following three months, the client team has a series of meetings with the designer, visits inspirational buildings and spaces, researches the challenge, and discusses the designer's initial ideas.
4. Concept: Once the pupils accept a final idea, the team and designer present the concept to the staff, pupils, governors and parents.

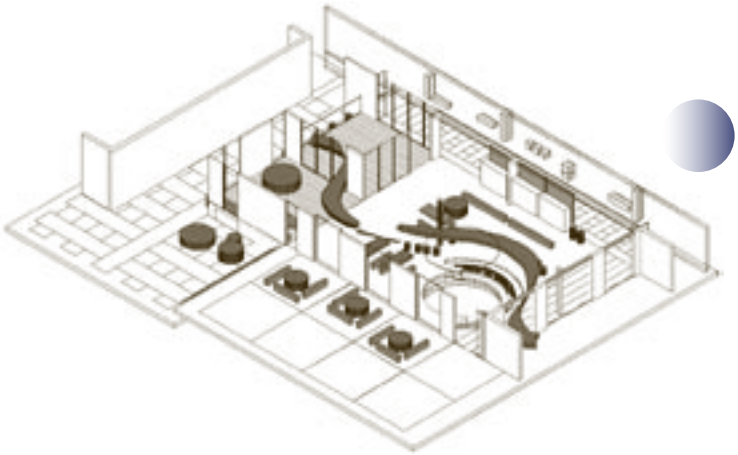
After the presentation of the final concept, discussions take place to explore the potential for implementation. Most of the joinedupdesignforschools projects are small to medium-size interventions, but all require funding if they are to be realised. The ten projects already completed have been funded by a combination of schools using part of their capital budgets, funds being raised in the local community and the generosity of the designers concerned. The Department for Education and Skills is providing partial support for a further range of representative projects on a matched funding basis.

Some of the first projects

Leasowes Community College in Dudley felt lost in the midst of a community centre which included an adult learning centre, a sports hall, a theatre and a library. The client team went to The Science Museum in London to study interactivity. The result of their work with Din Associates is a glass-fronted façade, inviting people inside and helping them find the various facilities. Head teacher John Howells thinks these ideas are realistic: "In fact, they are the ideas we have to do. People want education to function against best practice in the market, and yet they give us buildings that are sub-standard. With these designs you'd *want* to come to school, you'd *want* to carry on learning after 16. You'd want to carry on learning as an adult."



Leasowes Community College in Dudley



Whitefield Fishponds Community School (see drawing above) near Bristol had nowhere for pupils to shelter outside and nowhere to sit inside during break. The pupils presented their brief for a sheltered playground at the heart of the school. Architect Ferhan Azman found their ideas impressive: "They directed me in things to watch out for in my design work, like vandalism and litter." The school's art and design teacher and deputy head added, "The actual designs, in terms of artistic and practical use, are so far in advance of your general school structures you almost feel that if only the children were more involved in designing schools you would end up with much more attractive schools."

Whitefield Fishponds Community School – client team

St. George's Catholic School – dining room

St. George's Catholic School

St. George's Catholic School is a busy inner-city school in London. The client team felt that meal time was a problem because of the queuing outside and the congestion inside. With the designer Ben Kelly, they visited a range of restaurants to explore alternatives. His solution proposes using bespoke fold-up tables and chairs, and covering the queuing space. A 14-year-old client found the experience positive: "The designers are really up-front people. They took our ideas and improved them in many different ways. I thought this project was great."

The client team at **Deptford Park Primary School**, South East London, wanted better, brighter toilets, and they explored the problem with the Richard Rogers Partnership. The solution – a Caribbean-themed concept that is safe, hygienic, colourful and easy to clean – is exactly what the children wanted: "You look at the dolphins and you just feel relaxed. Like you're on holiday!" explained a ten-year-old client.

Life skills for pupils

Joinedupdesignforschools inspires pupils by putting them in the driving seat, giving them control and responsibility as clients. Through this experience, they discover creative and life skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, communication, negotiation and citizenship, all of which engender self-belief and confidence.

David Miliband, School Standards Minister, commented on the benefits that this project is bringing to young people: "Working with professional designers on real commissions can inspire children to take a much greater interest in the value of good design. The joinedupdesignforschools projects are enabling young people to be more creative and to see their visions become reality. Many of the projects focus on improving the environments in which they study, or their school image, meaning the benefits extend beyond those taking part. Learning from this programme will help many more schools to develop distinct identities."

The results of this five-year project will be revealed at an exhibition at London's Victoria and Albert Museum from 21 February to 18 March 2005. The exhibition will be accompanied by children's workshops and a lecture programme with architects and designers, pupils, government ministers, business and commercial spokespeople, and leading educationalists. Joinedupdesignforschools, *a fully illustrated, 192-page book to accompany the exhibition, will be published by Merrell in February at GBP 29.95.*

For further information, contact:
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THE NETHERLANDS' FIREBIRD SCHOOL: CLUSTERS FOR A FLEXIBLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Innovative teaching methods and organisational change make new demands on our future learning environments. The Brink and the Laak Clusters are two related examples of a new type of building for a community in the Netherlands. The Firebird School (*Vuurvogel*), a primary school for students from ages 4 to 12, is currently housed in the Brink Cluster and will move to the Laak when it opens in 2006. The Firebird School's needs and the resulting flexible building design are described here along with useful characteristics for creating flexibility in the learning environment.

Flexibility is the key concern for designing these new cluster buildings, taking into account concerns for future changes including:

- Community growth.
- Changes in school enrolment.
- Expanding use of information technology.
- Team teaching and new approaches to learning.
- Community learning and changing facilities needs for social use.

The Firebird along with another school, the City of Amersfoort and the architects *Frencken Scholl Architecten* have developed an innovative building to accommodate

The Brink Cluster in Vathorst

multiple uses and many types of learners. The decisions taken for Firebird's future school were based on the lessons learned at their existing, temporary location, the Brink Cluster. Based on the experiences of the Brink (opened in February 2004), the design of this type of community building continues to evolve.

The Brink is considered a "cluster building" rather than a school building. The cluster houses five primary schools, a child-care centre, a pre-school and a community centre with a café. The overall concept was to combine the schools and community centre under one roof to share large group spaces and an active café which serves as a welcoming point for visitors. The Brink Cluster (designed by SVP Architects, Amersfoort, and Atelier PRO, The Hague) is located in Amersfoort's recent development of Vathorst, a greenfield where nearly everyone is a new resident.

The Brink Cluster accommodates community use as seen here on opening day in February 2004.