

St. Aubyn's Press Release – New Buildings

One of the oldest prep schools in the country embraces modern architecture with two major new facilities.

The new Gordon James Dining Hall has been confirmed as the most energy efficient new building in the London Borough of Redbridge.

While the new Nursery, with an equally efficient energy performance, has enabled there to be two identical but integrated nurseries operating in the same building

St Aubyn's School in Woodford Green, Essex, is an independent co-educational preparatory day school with 524 pupils, ranging in age from 3 to 13. Founded in 1884, it is one of the oldest preparatory schools in the country and is set in eight acres of land with excellent teaching and sports facilities. It is within the Woodford Conservation Area

The school has recently completed a major reorganisation with the completion of two significant new buildings: a new Dining Hall with rehearsal and drama facilities and an impressive new Nursery building with state of the art facilities.

Leonard Blom, Headmaster, comments

"Our Dining Hall, which was built 3 years ago, has markedly improved the eating experience for children and staff. This excellent facility enables all pupils to enjoy high quality and nutritious food which is cooked on site by our new caterers Holroyd Howe. It also helps our pupils develop important social skills - it is a real pleasure to watch them engage in lively conversations with their peers and teachers. As part of our pastoral care programme, it also provides another opportunity for us to teach the children good table manners from a very young age.

The new Staffroom comfortably accommodates all three departments. I conduct my morning briefings with all staff present in one area which supports my belief in good communication across the school community. The new area is a perfect setting for staff meetings and INSET. An important social benefit is that the teachers have a quiet and sophisticated area to relax and enjoy refreshments.

The design of the purpose-built Performance Space for drama and dance teaching further enriches our excellent Expressive Arts programme.

We are very proud of our Nursery which really is a first rate facility. There are two separate classes which has helped to alleviate over-subscription for the setting. Each class is equipped with high quality resources designed specifically for use in the Early Years. This, coupled with the excellent teaching, makes this EYFS setting second to none."

Both buildings have been designed by Michael Foster AA Dipl MA RIBA (a former partner of The Tooley & Foster Partnership). They were built by contractor Kind & Co.

There are similarities between the two buildings in the simplicity of the design and in the use of matching materials

Michael Foster confirmed that there was a totally unbiased commitment by the client to look at different ideas throughout the design process: "As an architect it was very refreshing to table alternative concepts as the design developed, and to find that there was such a positive reaction to the adoption and development of new and previously unconsidered directions"

GORDON JAMES DINING HALL

The first project comprises a new Dining Hall for use by the whole School, with an associated commercial kitchen facility on the Ground Floor and a central Staff Room and rehearsal/drama facilities on the First Floor

It is located on a very sensitive grass site in the centre of the School grounds, with the original Locally Listed building on one side and a large pond, surrounded by trees, on the other. In order to reduce the apparent mass of the building in its sensitive setting it was conceived as three distinct forms, all interconnected internally but separated from each other externally by continuous flat roofed flashgaps - a two storey 'house', built in brick, adjacent to the existing Locally Listed building, a two storey 'barn' clad in traditional timber boarding, overlooking the pond and existing landscaping, and a fully glazed single storey 'pavilion', housing the Dining Hall under a zinc pyramid roof and set in the original lawn. Internally a central spine, leading from the front entrance to the external 'bandstand' overlooking the pond, architecturally holds the different elements of the building together

The building achieved BREEAM 'excellent' overall and 'outstanding' in many aspects, and has been confirmed as the most energy efficient new building in the London Borough of Redbridge. Its facilities serve all parts of the School and have allowed improved teaching and administrative areas to be developed within the existing buildings

NEW NURSERY BUILDING

The development of this building was prompted by two demands – the need to provide two distinct Nursery classes as the existing single Nursery was outdated and not appropriate for sub-division, and the desire to provide onsite residential accommodation for new staff moving into the area

The two storey building, located at the end of the campus and on the site of the original 1970's single storey Nursery, therefore includes two integrated Nurseries on the Ground Floor and two staff flats on the First Floor, all designed within a simple 'L' shaped form.

Each Nursery is identical in plan within each wing, with shared toilet and staff facilities located in the elbow of the 'L'. They both include a main space, a wet area and a large

conservatory, wrapping around a courtyard for communal play, with an adjacent covered play area leading out to an extensive playground and garden.

The two flats on the First Floor have a separate dedicated entrance. There is a self-contained one bedroom flat and a similar two bedroom flat, both of which are generous in area and provide good accommodation for single teachers or a teacher with a family. They both overlook the extensive landscaped campus.

The Ground Floor of the building is predominantly built in a red brick, matching the colour of the adjacent building, with the whole of the First Floor enclosed in a 'barn' type roof, finished in zinc to match the roof of the earlier Dining Hall. The building sits right on the edge of the campus, and this particular form was designed in order to minimise impact on the Conservation Area beyond the School grounds.

This building is similarly energy efficient.

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