

New Ark, St Benedict's School

Our second building for St Benedict's School, the New Ark Junior school building, provides classrooms and space for the Nursery which was previously off-site, as well as creating a secure and welcoming entrance and reception to the Junior School. A new stair and lift provide full accessibility to both the New Ark and the main Junior School building, to which it is connected via a new glazed link.

The New Ark also provides specialist accommodation such as learning resource areas and a home economics classroom. All classrooms are south facing to get maximum benefit from sunlight, while solar shading prevents unwanted solar gain and glare. Nursery and Reception classes have direct access to a secure, outside play area and a canopy provides external sheltered areas for the pupils outside the classroom.

This extremely low energy use building is constructed of modern structural cross-laminated timber panels, chosen both for their ability to be fabricated off-site and minimise disruption to the working School, and for their airtightness performance which will contribute to achieving Passivhaus certification. Constructing to Passivhaus standards is an innovative solution that ensures minimal energy demands and running costs and excellent fresh air quality at all times to keep pupils and staff alert.

The building responds sensitively to its immediate context and the planning constraints inherent to the conservation area. The new building's series of pitched roofs respond to the rhythm of the surrounding conservation area roofscape, and 'tumbled' brickwork on the gables provides articulation to the elevations. A high-quality red facing brick was chosen to compliment the palette of the School's existing buildings and to allow the building to sit comfortably as a distinct new element of the streetscape, critical to securing planning permission for the project.

All of the building's materials look good and feel good to the touch, weather well, improve with age and will require minimal maintenance and have a long service life. Their environmental impact over their lifetime was also considered so as to minimise the environmental impact of the building.

A rigorous template system for the setting out of the innovative basalt fibre cavity wall ties was developed by the main contractor, to ensure the best possible standard of construction was achieved for the through the full depth of the external wall build-up.

Combining traditional brickwork with innovative Passivhaus construction methods has resulted in a building of the highest quality, providing the best possible spaces for learning, and supporting the School's long-term ambitions.

Client / St Benedict's School, London

Value / £4m

Area / 1659

Completion Date / 2017

Location / London

Our Role / Architect And Lead Consultant