

The impact of design within SEN Schools



PROJECT	Aspire School
CLIENT	Kent County Council
CONTRACTOR	BAM Construction
ARCHITECT	Bond Bryan
VALUE	£9m
LOCATION	Sittingbourne
GIFA	3,250m ²

Need

The Aspire School is a special, free school in Sittingbourne for children aged from 4 to 11 years. It was founded with an ambition to transform the opportunities of many young people with special education needs.

The primary school was created to help meet the growing need for additional provision for children in Kent with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) and severe speech and language difficulties (SSLD).

Solution

The design was developed using BIM Level 2 – in close collaboration by the architects and Grove Park Academies Trust – following an in-depth review of a number of SEN schools and their facilities.

The aim was to achieve the most important objective: to create an environment that both inspires young people, and provides the ideal backdrop to nurture lifelong learning experiences for the children who learn there.

Going beyond design excellence and embedding a holistic understanding of how buildings can enhance the day-to-day life of their users, as well as focusing on sustainable and environmentally-responsive design, was at the heart of this project.

The Aspire School has been designed specifically around the needs of the children that will be attending, and it will provide an outstanding educational setting.

Careful consideration has been given to all aspects of the design process to help promote engagement, wellbeing and achievement.

Outcome

The goal is that Aspire School will not only be an outstanding provision for the young people that attend the school but, in the future, it will also be a leading school for children with ASC and SSLD.

Long-term, the school hopes to develop links and provide expert support to other schools and the wider community.

“The design of the school aims to provide a cohesive and inspiring educational facility. The learning experience of those with learning difficulties can be greatly enhanced by removing distractions and providing a safe, structured environment alongside clear routines in the classroom.”

The elements of comfort, relaxation, motivation and inspiration are all essential to the SEN learning experience and must be considered if pupils are going to engage with, and enjoy, the environment they are within whilst helping them to feel safe.”

Caroline Gibbs – SEN Design Expert

