

As part of the London Borough of Newham's Building Schools for the Future programme, ArchitecturePLB was appointed to redevelop Eastlea Community School in Canning Town. Our proposals involved a phased redevelopment for this occupied site, providing new and refurbished facilities to meet the current needs of the curriculum and help to establish improved security in and around the site.

The existing school was housed in a variety of different buildings ranging from a Victorian Board School building right through to 1980s and 1990s 'temporary' accommodation blocks. Our first task was therefore to assess the relative merits and potential value in the various buildings before developing an overall masterplan for redevelopment.

One of the school's main problems was that it was entirely open to the public, with very poorly defined boundaries. A road which bisected the site had officially been closed, yet still looked, and was used as, a public right of way. Furthermore, the main reception was located at the very centre of the site meaning that it was impossible for the school to 'police' visitors. Careful planning and coordination was also required for the execution of these works, with

the restrictions on noise and access that naturally come with working on an occupied school site.

In response to these challenges, we developed a five-phase proposal to be carried out over a period of 18 months. In so doing we paid considerable attention to the sequence of construction, 'designing-out' disruption and minimising the need for decanting wherever possible to reduce the impact on the ongoing life of the school.

By removing the temporary accommodation from the centre of the campus we were able to create a new landscaped focus for the school, surrounded by a combination of existing, extended and new buildings. This remodelling has enabled significant improvements externally and has provided new designated staff parking, enhanced amenity space and better security.

Key priorities included significant remodelling and extension of a former Victorian Board school to provide more flexible learning spaces, including 'break-out' areas. Dining and art accommodation has been replaced by a new building, linking to technology and design facilities in the refurbished Victorian building.



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01 Interior of new dining hall  
02 Entrance interior where new wing meets Victorian building  
03 Dining and art accommodation



Refurbishing and extending the existing science accommodation has improved facilities and incorporated all science laboratories into one building. A new entrance has also been created in a gap between existing 1960s buildings, to provide a secure public face and an identity and focus within the local neighbourhood. In addition to school facilities it incorporates a range of community functions including an 'enterprise café, part-funded by Thames Gateway.

*"We are so pleased with the new facilities and feel very privileged to have them. The school used to be a sea of concrete, but now it is nicely landscaped, has lots of covered areas and much more of a campus feel, which is conducive to good learning. It's important to create a tranquil environment and the students love it. In fact, we've had some of our past pupils come back to complain about why we couldn't have done it when they were there! The new facilities have always been part of the school's vision – we want to be at the heart of the community. We believe that what we have delivered will make people realise that we don't just offer an education for their children, we have something to offer them as well."*

Chinye Jibunoh, Principal



- 01 Campus site plan
- 02 New landscaping
- 03 Refurbished Victorian building
- 04 New open plan art space
- 05 Main entrance