

ESSA FREE SCHOOL, BOLTON



LOCATION: BOLTON

COMPLETION: 2015

VALUE: £2M

SIZE: 2,115M²

SERVICE: ARCHITECTURE, LANDSCAPE

SECTOR: EDUCATION

CLIENT: ISG

CONTRACTOR: ISG

LANDSCAPE: AUSTIN-SMITH:LORD

STRUCTURES: RENAISSANCE

SERVICES: TACE



This exciting new school was set up under the Government's Free School initiative by the Essa Foundation Academies Trust. The school caters for children aged four to eleven. The project was part refurbishment and part new build to accommodate 420 pupils.

The project was supported by the Education Funding Agency's Free School programme. The site, which was occupied by a partially demolished secondary school, was in need of a new lease of life. The EFA carried out an initial feasibility assessment and came to the conclusion that the existing facility could be refurbished and extended into a new primary school; from reception through to juniors.

The new primary school building was originally a former high school building. Previously the existing building housed the school PE and dining halls, with large 6th form teaching bases, assembly and PE space, kitchens, offices and WCs.

The challenge for Austin-Smith:Lord was to understand how the existing large areas could be broken up into smaller zones of education spaces, for each of the clusters of Key Stage year groups. The utilisation of the taller spaces with clerestory windows to bring ventilation and natural light into the deeper spaces was paramount to the success of the design.



New legible circulation routes were vital, to allow the pupils ease of movement around a difficult building footprint. Consequently this created interesting opportunities for breakout and ICT spaces.

Existing courtyard areas were infilled to make way for two new-build classrooms, at approximately fifteen percent of the original building footprint.

External play and sports areas were created on this difficult sloping site.

Multi-use games areas were introduced alongside reception and infants play spaces, created with areas of natural habitat that are used as external teaching spaces.

A key factor was the requirement to link the new refurbishment facility to the existing senior school academy at the bottom of the site.

Bright coloured rendered facades, reflecting the schools colours, have improved the existing building fabric with areas of timber introduced for a softer, natural look. We worked closely with the contractor and the EFA to define the extent of the works and the sizes of the required teaching spaces, aligning with current EFA standards.

The first phase of the temporary refurbishment works, as an enabling package, is now converted into a pre-school facility. This project was delivered as part of the North West Construction Hub Framework.