

Commissioned under the DfES Academies Programme Framework Agreement, the St Matthew Academy for Business and Enterprise is a new build all-age City Academy, catering for 1320 pupils from the age of 4 to 16 along with a 13-place nursery. The project was shortlisted for an RIBA Award in 2010 and Highly Commended in the BCSE Inspiring Design Awards 2009.

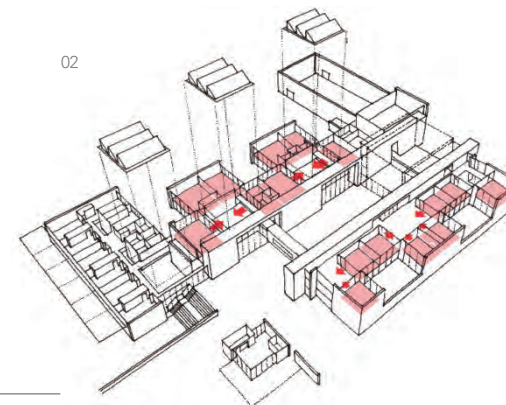
The new school was built on existing playing fields between the predecessor school buildings. The site is within the Blackheath Conservation Area, bounded by residential development including some Listed buildings. A considered approach to materials and massing allowed a contemporary building to be created, reflecting the Business and Enterprise specialism, whilst responding to the sensitive context. Energy conservation was also a strong influence on the building form and massing, with top-lit atria and courtyards maximising natural light and ventilation. Photovoltaic panels and a green roof add to the project's sustainable credentials.

The Academy caters for both secondary and primary pupils. The design provides opportunities for sharing facilities while maintaining distinct areas appropriate to the

needs of children of different age groups. The dining facilities, library and assembly hall are shared by all pupils, and a shared staff room encourages dialogue and collaboration between primary and secondary staff.

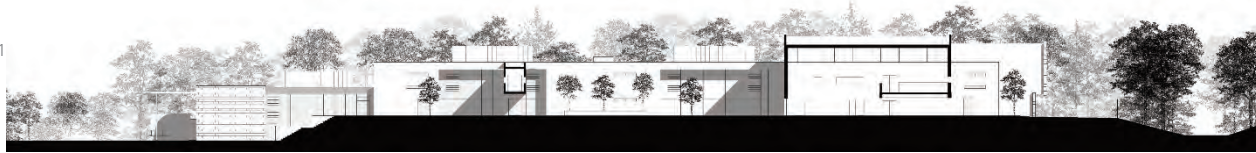
Key Stage 1 and 2 class bases are located to the west at ground and lower ground floor, taking advantage of a step in site levels to allow primary class bases to open out to their own external play areas. This location allowed a separate entrance to be created, providing a route for primary pupils and parents directly into the play areas at the beginning and end of the day.

The innovative design responds to the educational aspects of the brief providing for project-based and personalised learning with a mix of open and enclosed spaces. Enclosed, more traditional classrooms are gathered around the open plan breakout areas providing a high degree of flexibility and openness, facilitating group working and creating an environment that reflects the modern workplace. In the specialist areas these breakout areas are double height, top-lit spaces, providing a focus for each specialist department.



01 External courtyard
02 Diagram of open spaces
03 Double height ICT atrium

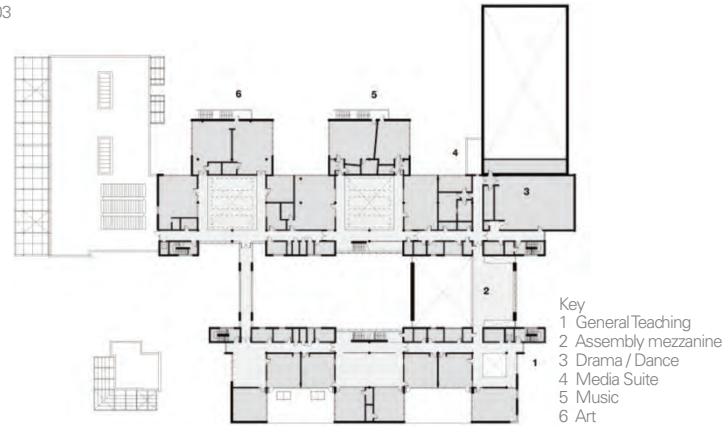
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Key to the school's Christian ethos is the development of a strong school community. A high degree of transparency and visual connection between the various elements of the Academy reinforce this sense of community as well as responding to the brief for a contemporary and businesslike, modern learning environment.

The assembly hall is designed as a focal space for the school community; clad in warm timber with natural light flooding in during the day and artificial light shining out at night, it provides a celebratory space at the heart of the school.

04



05



- 01 Longitudinal section
- 02 Assembly Hall
- 03 First floor plan
- 04 Key Stage 2 play area
- 05 External canopy