



State-of-the-art facility nears completion

A new state-of-the-art facility for international students is currently under development on Creek Road, London. The new facility will offer courses on European languages, high school and university preparation, IT and business degrees, and post graduate studies.

The main development on the site involves the construction of a new student campus by Jarvis UPP, providing accommodation for 950 students. Study Group International has taken the lease on 250 of the units for their own students with the remaining residential units being allocated to students from the nearby Laban Dance Centre, Trinity College of Music and the University of Greenwich.

The Study Group college which is being done under a separate contract occupies the north west corner of the site and adjoins Rachel McMillan Nursery School, which has recently been listed, and St Nicholas Church. Both of these buildings are also currently undergoing refurbishment.

The site itself slopes approximately 2.4m from north to south and in order to accommodate the planning restrictions imposed on the building height, the north end of the building has been excavated into the ground. At the south the building's floor slab is level with the external ground, and at the north, the external ground is just below the first floor slab level.

The building is built in steel frame and in-situ, power floated concrete slabs. The external walls are tied back to a secondary structural framing system with a split faced blockwork plinth at the base of the building that is also carried to the rear corners of the building. The front corner is clad with a terracotta rainscreen, and it also incorporates a graphic sign with the Client's logo. The remaining building is clad with solid core laminate rainscreen with flush aluminium windows.

A feature three-storey high curtain wall at the front elevation backs onto a mini atrium/reception space with a large circular rooflight located above. Other building features include a brise soleil at roof level, supported off three-storey high circular columns, which are floodlit at night.

Due to site constraints, the building has a simple rectangular shape that follows the perimeter of the site. This shape has also proved to be a cost effective solution. The two upper floors are fitted with three rows of classrooms; two on the outer flank walls, and one at the centre. The classrooms are fitted for a range of functions, including general teaching, ICT and science laboratories. There is a central library providing study, reference and research facilities as well as computer terminals used as an Internet cafe.

The ground floor accommodates the building's amenities including a stylish cafe/restaurant, bookshop, offices and staff welfare. The Client wanted a contemporary interior more akin to a trendy cafe/bar or dot.com company than the traditional school building. This is possible as the school caters for the older independent student and does not suffer from the vandalism associated with some state schools. This has been achieved by the use of an off-white colour scheme incorporating vibrant accent colours on key walls.

The doors are in American white oak veneer and have flush overdoor panels and door frames, while the classroom doors have an adjoining full height glazed screen

instead of vision panels cut into the door. The ironmongery and electrical switch plates are in brushed stainless steel. There are a number of glazed screens off the atrium lobbies. These are designed in tiled modules and instead of standard manifestation, incorporate Study Group's graphics on the frosted film.

The main feature staircase has treads and risers in solid American white oak, secret fixed to the steel spine frame. Stainless steel inserts are grooved into the treads to form non-slip nosings. The floor finishes are also of a high specification and vary from limestone tiling to the base of the atrium and lift car, to carpet to the classrooms and corridors, and two tone linoleum in the cafe/restaurant.

There is soft and hard landscaping around the building, but as the site is so restricted, the soft landscaping has been confined to the north end of the site, all other sides have hard landscape finishes. Five parking bays are provided, two of which are designed for the disabled. This is a low provision but the main development has a 'no-car' policy, which forbids resident students from using cars while living at the site. This radical transportation measure is workable given that there are good public transport facilities both day and night.

Watkins Gray International LLP are the design architects, having done the scheme design, outline specification and are monitoring the works during construction on behalf of the Client. R Durnell & Sons Limited is the Main Contractor and have appointed Frank Shaw Associates the construction architects to develop the construction information and obtain the statutory approvals.

Work commenced on site in August 2003 with completion scheduled to take place in September 2004.

The project was designed, specified and procured to achieve best value with the Study Group facility incorporating higher quality materials and finishes compared to what tends to be provided on standard PFI schools currently being rolled out nationwide.