

Case Study

# City Academy, Hackney



Delivered for City of London Corporation

Facilities: New Academy to raise education standards in Homerton, Hackney | August 2009  
Value: £30 million



**Introduction** This was a further collaboration between Willmott Dixon, architects Studio E and City of London Corporation, who were responsible for an academy in Southwark that won the Prime Minister's award in 2006.

This academy, built in the deprived Homerton area of Hackney, was intended to raise the aspirations of local pupils by providing a high quality environment for 1,100 pupils aged 11-18, with a focus on community engagement, sport, fitness and live performance areas.

Situated on a tight urban site flanked by a busy main road, the long, thin plot was used as an advantage with a design that weaves round existing trees with classrooms running either side of a naturally lit circulation space.

**Key Facts** Has achieved national acclaim, winning three major awards in the first 12 months:

- Winner in innovation for student involvement at the PfS awards
- Winner for new project category in CIBSE Low Carbon Performance awards
- Winner for Inspiring design at BCSE awards

**Details** Internally, the school's transparent classroom walls are designed to maximize daylight. This increases the pupils concentration and good behavior, while also contributing to improved security. Further natural light is provided by three large ETFE roofs over the atrium corridors.

Externally, the multi-coloured cladding creates a landmark building for the area.

**Successes** Six months into the project, the existing school was switched from Morning Lane in Hackney to its current location, which was handled smoothly and with minimal disruption to pupil learning. The team had such a good working relationship, they handed over the academy two weeks early to enable the final fit-out to begin.

Other successes include achieving DCSF funding for carbon reduction of £50 per sq metre, and saving £600,000 through early involvement value engineering.

**Sustainable achievements**

- Part-built using the sustainable timber system Eurban, which produced zero waste and has less embodied carbon than other materials.
- Naturally ventilated, despite being adjacent to a busy high street. This was achieved using an innovative combination of a simple double façade, which acts as an acoustic screen, and attenuated ventilation openings.
- Building achieved an A rated energy performance certificate.
- Natural cross ventilation saves an estimated 180,000 KW per year and the high levels of daylight saves approximately 85,000 kW per year.

**Community initiatives** Children from the local primary schools and colleges set a design brief for the academy under the guidance of the Sorrell Foundation, which was set up to foster student engagement in design. The team went further than required, involving the children throughout the project which included live site tours and workshops. This was documented and is now used as a guidance booklet for other projects.

**Relationships** Good communication and a tight system for decision-making allowed the team to bring the project in on time and on budget, despite a six month set back at the beginning of the process when the location of the school changed.

**BREEAM** Very Good

**Testimonials** **Mark Emmerson, Principal, City Academy**

"The building we occupy is a triumph of form and function, a landmark piece of architecture which lifts the environment for our students, teachers and the local community as a whole. It is spacious, light and comfortable to work in. Many new schools and Academies are practical with very little to inspire students. A few are inspiring but very difficult to work in. Our academy provides an almost perfect balance."

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