

SKANSKA



Essex Schools

Energetic excellence at Castle View School



Overview

The first thing that strikes you at the new Castle View School in the center of Canvey Island, Essex, UK, is its energy. Students bustle from lesson to lesson, clearly engaged and enthusiastic to be using these world-class facilities. Teachers prepare stretching and challenging classes in an environment where resources are never a problem. Skanska's FM support staff work quietly behind the scenes, using the latest infrastructure and clear guidelines on service levels to make sure everything keeps running smoothly.

It's an environment that has driven some massive improvements since the £28m new build was handed over by Skanska in 2012. In 2014, 76% students achieved A*-C grade in English, up from 47%, putting the school in the top quintile in the country. Other areas were also strong performers, such as maths in which 62% achieved an A*-C grade in Maths, up from 32%, and attendance rose from below the national average to above it. Further proof of the school's success is that its 1200 total roll is routinely oversubscribed. Its Ofsted* rating has

also soared, from 'Satisfactory' to 'Good with Outstanding features'.

Head teacher Gill Thomas says that the way her highly committed teaching staff have harnessed the new facilities in service of a stimulating curriculum is inspiring students and fuelling the school's success. *'Why wouldn't you want to come to school and do well when there are so many exciting things going on,'* she's fond of saying.

Castle View's clear status as a beacon for educational excellence is the outcome of a complex development journey. Originally intended to add capacity on a site that was home to another school, the current building was procured and mostly designed by its retiring

*Ofsted, The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, is a non-ministerial department of the UK government. Ofsted carries out regular inspections of each school in England, resulting in a published evaluation of the effectiveness of the school.

head under the Building Schools for the Future initiative. When Gill Thomas took over in 2012 to complete the school and move the existing Castle View into its new home alongside pupils from the existing school, the logistics were extremely challenging.

'We were part of a restructuring program for Canvey Island and the wider region to grow from a six-form entry to eight – or 180 to 240 students a year. But during the construction of this new school and a new further education (FE) college on the old Castle View site, we had to deal with demolition on two sites and three new buildings, which we had to co-ordinate so there were facilities for all the different lessons.'

Intensive planning for the new school between 2010 and 2012 involved all the school's heads and assistant heads working as a distributed leadership team to make sure no individual took on too much. This process focused completely on teaching and learning, putting the final touches to the school's design in a way that enabled the best mix of traditional and innovative pedagogies to be deployed.

With practical specialist subjects based at the main site throughout construction, information and communications technology (ICT) was

crucial, and Associate Head Anthony Sapping was instrumental in designing systems to support the curriculum and the move as seamlessly as possible. Now ICT is used throughout the school, with an interactive whiteboard in each classroom, a media suite with Apple computers and wireless access throughout the building.

Passive supervision combined with breakout spaces in which students use their laptops fosters what Anthony calls 'deeply independent learning'. Even the public address system is used to bind the school community together by allowing school announcements and pastoral reminders that link students to their community and the wider world. *'We can tell them when everyone's supposed to be observing a minute's silence and other events like that,'* says Gill Thomas. As a result, Ofsted found the schools social, moral and emotional care 'exemplary'.

When the move finally came, deputy head Lee Thorne played a prominent role as figurehead for a physical decant that involved 2200 crates, which allowed his colleagues to retain their focus on teaching and learning in the new building. Communications between his team and parents were a vital part of bringing the two existing schools together.





'It was very exciting to have a blank canvas to work with,' adds Gill Thomas. 'The architecture is open, light and inviting, and we carried that through into clear branding for the different disciplines and a fresh citrus lime color which we chose to set the scene for real excellence.'

The result is an extraordinary concentration of academic, performance and sporting facilities that's part university, part media city and part health and nutrition camp. The building's star-shaped design dedicates a wing to each discipline, with classrooms in each that can be opened up to provide more flexible teaching spaces.

These academic spaces, mapped and arranged specifically for individual teachers and their classes, are encouraging students to raise their aspirations. *'I want to go to university,'* says one of them, *'and this points you in the right direction.'*

'I'd much rather be at this school than the old one,' says another. *'There's more space and light, and more places to go.'*

Alongside state-of-the-art science labs and a library that's grown from 2000 to 6000 books since the move, world-class facilities for the arts and sport are helping students follow their dreams.

Performance and creative spaces include recording studios, a school radio station, and a mirrored dance studio with a great sound system. An assembly hall designed specially for the school seats 260 in chairs that fold away electronically to accommodate larger, standing gatherings.

Castle View has a long and distinguished sporting tradition and its world-class new sports facilities, which Ofsted scored as 'Outstanding' in its specialist report, are helping build on that record. Track and field resources include one of the country's few hammer cages, as well as track and run up surfaces that comply with national standards for adults. A fully equipped gym that would be the envy of many leisure centers sits amidst pitches and sports halls that provide enough space for everyone.



'Teams and individuals from our school are regularly county champions and one former student competed in the Commonwealth Games last year,' says Gill Thomas proudly. 'We're also able to let out the sports facilities to the community, which brings in money and adds to the family feeling that Ofsted also praised.'

As the end of the traditional school day approaches, no one seems ready to go home. A rehearsal for a school concert is underway in the main hall, dancers and athletes stay behind in their respective places to practice, and even students in the food technology class are reluctant to stop.

Gill Thomas concludes: *'We've made the school as good as we can and we celebrate our students' achievements by putting work on the walls and holding regular awards evenings. We're giving them aspirations for further study and employability, and the energy and engagement you see are their response to that.'*







The project in brief

Castle View is an 11-16 Comprehensive School with 1,200 students. It is situated in the center of the town on Canvey Island, Essex, England. The school is a new build and the project involved relocating to the busy town center.

- Floor area 10,343 m²
- % New build 97%
- % Retained 3%
- Construction start May 2010
- Construction end December 2011
- Capex £27,474k
- Total FM per annum £380k

The Essex Building Schools for the Future program

Essex is northeast of London and is one of the UK's most populous counties. Skanska and our joint venture partner RM Plc hold the contract to redevelop schools in Essex as part of the former UK Government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) program.

Essex Local Education Partnership (Essex LEP) is a special purpose company set up to deliver educational infrastructure projects in Essex. Shareholders in Essex LEP include Essex County Council (ECC), Skanska, RM and Amber Infrastructure.

A £73m contract for the development of the first four schools (three PFI, one Design & Build) was signed in May 2010 and the schools were handed over to the client in spring 2012.

Essex LEP are currently working with ECC to deliver a range of projects in Essex including primary and secondary schools and also special education needs schools. The strategic partnership agreement with ECC remains in place until 2020.

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