

PROJECT INFO**Client**

St Edward Homes/
Royal Borough of
Kensington & Chelsea

Executive architect

Squire and Partners

Delivery architect

Stockwool

Planning consultant

Gerald Eve

Services

Mott McDonald

Structure

OCSC

Education consultant

Institute of Education



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SCHOOLS

Educating Kensington

A new primary school for 210 pupils establishes a civic presence to the local community while addressing environmental and noise issues

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THE ROYAL BOROUGH of Kensington and Chelsea in London is both the smallest local authority in England and Wales and also the most densely populated, presenting a challenge in providing infrastructure for its growing community. As a result, the borough recently commissioned a new primary school to be constructed. Kensington Primary Academy is the first new, purpose-built school in the borough in more than 100 years, creating places for 210 local students as well as public facilities for use by the wider community.

The school is single-form entry for pupils aged from four to 11 years old and is located on the prominent corner of Kensington High Street and Warwick Road. Part of the larger Squire and Partners-designed Warwick Road Masterplan, the location presented its own challenges says

project director Barnaby Johnston. 'Our designs needed to establish a civic presence to the immediate and wider residential community, while also coping with environmental and noise issues presented by the busy location, and ensuring the safety of families accessing the school.'

The team approached the design of the tightly constrained site as an opportunity to maximise use of all available space, creating courtyard play areas, a rooftop playspace including quiet zones, and a multiuse games court at basement level. A full-height central atrium and multiple roof-lights create an airy, light-filled space while also providing privacy from the busy roads surrounding the site on two sides. A wildlife garden and landscaping provide green spaces for learning and play, and improve air quality for students and teachers.

A strongly modelled brick facade, with minimal windows addressing the road, creates a buffer to the learning spaces within, adding interest with coloured fins and faceted window reveals, explains Johnston. Children and parents access the school via an entrance facing the park, with a separate entry point for the wider community to access public facilities including meeting rooms, kitchen and sports hall.

The facade employs a playful and animated design, composed of handset brick and prefabricated stone panels, with brightly coloured rooftop glazing casting rainbow shadows throughout the atrium. Stockwool completed the detailed design, adopting a pre-fabricated, cross-laminated-timber (CLT) superstructure to provide excellent acoustic and thermal performance, fast construction and a watertight building in just a few weeks. The CLT structure was manufactured in Austria from sustainably managed forests' wood and outperforms steel and concrete in terms of embodied energy, carbon emissions and waste. >

All above Squire and Partners' response to the commission for a new primary school in Kensington