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Kingdom: Booker Park

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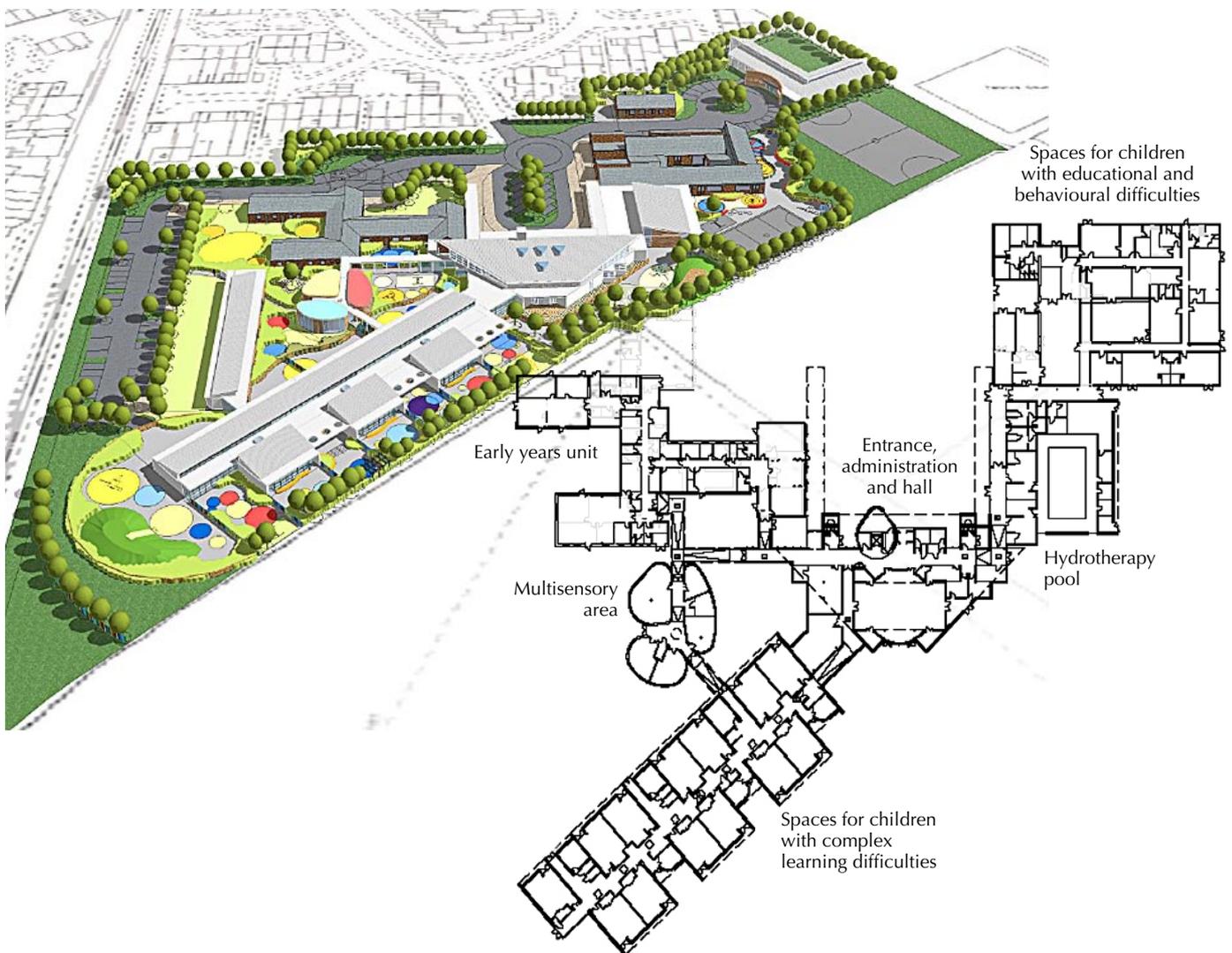
Special Primary School Complex in the United Kingdom: Booker Park

By Mark Robinson, Jacobs Engineering UK Ltd., United Kingdom

Booker Park School is a new complex for pre-primary children and primary pupils with a range of behavioural and learning difficulties. To respond to the pupils' varied needs, the school facilities offer a high degree of flexibility and a quality environment for learning.

THE COMPLEX

Booker Park School was developed as part of the reorganisation of Special Needs Education in the county of Buckinghamshire, United Kingdom. It has been in use since September 2007. The project cost was approximately GBP 8 million.





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The new facilities sit between two existing schools, Kynaston and Stoke Leys, uniting them in a single complex. Kynaston School already catered for children with educational and behavioural difficulties (EBD) and, as well as meeting the needs of these pupils, the new school serves those with severe learning difficulties (SLD) and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD).

The overall site was planned to provide easy access to learning for all pupils while maintaining the school's desire to teach children with EBD separately from the others.

All spaces for pupils are located on ground level, however the opportunity was taken to reinforce the sense of arrival at the school by creating a two-storey element at the main entrance. At the same time, a low pitch roof minimises the impact of the building height.



THE SPACES

The new school required 13 general teaching classrooms, an early years unit, a multi-sensory area, a school hall, a hydrotherapy pool, a staff and administration base, as well as spaces for visiting specialists and therapists, hygiene areas and pupil toilets.

The general teaching classrooms provide sufficient space for a high level of personal tuition, and each has its own external learning/play area. The external areas give a sense of enclosure and security for children to enjoy freedom while still under supervision. The classrooms, naturally ventilated and day lit, are positioned to the south of the site taking advantage of the views to the Chiltern Hills and adjacent farmland. Where specific one-to-one support is required, small rooms and alcoves have been created adjacent to teaching spaces which can also be utilised for storing the special equipment required by pupils.

The early years unit caters to pre-school age children and accommodates teaching areas for pupils with PMLD.



The multisensory area includes specialist teaching spaces for music and art therapy, soft play areas, an ultra-violet room and a sensory theatre. The sensory rooms and associated external sensory areas are positioned to give full access from the main teaching areas and the early years unit.

The staff and administration base is located on the upper floor. The staffroom offers a respite for staff, and is spacious, with its own deck overlooking the Chilterns.



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The school hall and hydrotherapy pool are placed at the heart of the complex. The pool measures 13 x 7.5 metres and has a variable depth floor which drops to a maximum of 1.2 metres. As well as providing a facility for all the pupils, the ability to segregate the pool and changing rooms from the rest of the school has permitted its use by the wider community, thus – it is hoped – helping pupils see themselves as part of that community.

ARCHITECTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

The decision was taken to make the new building a modern statement of architectural form while responding to the need for flexibility in its future use. Consequently the building is constructed using a steel frame, glass and render with cedar cladding. Environmental considerations were fundamental in the design's development and include solar shading, zoning of heating systems, in addition to a cross-flow natural ventilation system and natural day lighting.

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