

Case study 2.

BSF school Marsden Heights Community College.

All new schools, as with all public buildings, must be sustainable, by law, by 2016. All existing schools, hospitals, prisons etc must be sustainable by 2020. So why are we still using public money on unhealthy, unsustainable, inequitable developments?

MHCC is one example of many of the newly completed BSF schools that tell us that stopping further similar developments is not, really, a bad thing. The newly opened school caters for 1000 11-16 year olds in Nelson, Lancashire. Like many of its peers MHCC features smart-looking new suites of rooms and internal open spaces. That the school feels (and prompts behaviour) like a prison is a feature of its design. Although teenagers are still growing children the design and ultimate form of the site does not acknowledge this.

- Ø In the library (LRC) the view through the expansive windows is glorious, but there are 3 bean bags, few books and no quiet study carousels.
- Ø Outside the grounds are bleak . 11 single species 'architectural' trees have been strategically placed around the only paved area with 6 fixed seats available to students. The rubbish bins are more prominent than the cold, metal seats and no social interaction is encouraged as the seats are in the wind-swept shade of the main building.
- Ø That the trees could have supplied shade and free fresh fruit has been missed
- Ø If the paving had been an interesting mix of permeable and non interesting field studies could have been made of the site
- Ø Opportunities for the teenagers to relax after the hard work of classroom studies, to rest and play, are not apparent.
- Ø Aside from the limited appeal of football there is little to encourage the children to move outdoors - there are no 'destinations' within the grounds to encourage exploration or excite curiosity
- Ø Aside from a newly-planted deciduous woodlot and an empty greenhouse there is nothing for the students to care for, observe and develop responsibility
- Ø There is no inclusive, accessible flow from the front visitor's only entrance to the outdoor student area with steps providing the only access
- Ø Positive behaviour is not encouraged and assumed not to exist with CCTV spying on the children's every move. Every business manager knows employees perform to expectation. Children respond in the same way.
- Ø Emotional well-being is hampered by no differentiation of space for quiet, active, adventurous and expressive play

For a full analysis and outline of what is possible for little money and constrained sites click [here](#) .

For further information on the effect of sub-optimal grounds development click [here](#) .

NOTE: This case study in no way implies that MHCC is a bad school or has not achieved a significant improvement on the old school. It simply serves to highlight some of the issues that get overlooked when architects and contractors aren't trained teachers and teachers aren't trained design professionals! Greenstone Design UK is fortunate to be led by a trained teacher and health care advisor who is also an accomplished designer.

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