



Thomas Deacon Academy, Peterborough

THE 2008 RIBA AWARD WINNERS FOR THE EAST REGION INCLUDE THOMAS DEACON ACADEMY, DESIGNED BY FOSTER + PARTNERS.

Foodservice design was by Derek White FCSI, Food Service Consultants Ltd.
Photography courtesy of Foster + Partners and Nigel Young, Foster + Partners.

Says RIBA (www.architecture.com): "To describe this building as 'three layers of undulating ribboned classrooms enclosing a central courtyard underneath a dramatic light diffused roof' is true, but utterly fails to describe how this enormous 2000 student school has been designed around one space and at a human scale. Naturally lit, largely naturally ventilated, secure from bullying, dramatic, exciting and easy to use and a pleasure to be in, this building will be a beacon for secondary education design. More an internal village than a school building, the six colleges formed by the V-shaped floor plates revolves around the communication space at the heart of the building. This is a school that is difficult to describe, easy to use. A real achievement."

Darron Haylock, Partner, led the design team at Foster + Partners. "We wanted to create a breathtaking building but one which would inspire, not intimidate," says Haylock.

"After analysis of the brief we decided that creating six colleges or faculties was the best way of managing the Academy. Each holds around 350 pupils, has its own identity in terms of colouring and graphics and the pupils identify with and remain in that faculty for their school career. Each faculty has an integral study area and 'help desk' which provides a focal point and somewhere to report when the sports kit or school bag has been forgotten.

"Around 100 classrooms were required for the 2200, 11 to 19 year old pupils. Some are technology based – and have also won an award – and others more conventional. If you laid them end to end, that's an awful lot of space. But imagine pushing that line into a three-storey concertina. It creates a fantastic space and maximises economy in construction, especially of the external cladding."

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REFECTORY

Situated on the first floor with access from the main concourse and also from a secondary entrance, the refectory is adjacent to the sports hall and theatre and can be operated separately from the school for evening functions.

The seating capacity is 300, serviced by a ground floor preparation kitchen and central stores area. With dedicated 'cleans' and 'dirties' lifts servicing only the catering areas, the first floor has a main production kitchen and servery, supported by a kiosk/cafe area, with a remote dishwashing facility.

The whole dining area is so designed to move six sittings of pupils over a 2½ hour period, so a quick, slick service is required and dining room supervision is essential to keep the space turning over.

"We found Derek by recommendation," says Haylock, "and he was one of three foodservice designers we approached. He clinched the contract because of his personal drive. Derek is very passionate about his work and highly committed. In terms of delivery, I had and have no worries whatsoever. He understood very quickly what the client wanted and his 'can do' attitude impressed, especially when things don't go your way.

"The equipment package was very good and market tested, then tendered and came in on target. I have no hesitation in recommending Derek and look forward to working with him again.

"Would I do anything different next time? Yes, I would get Derek involved earlier at a strategic level so he could get a brief first hand from the client, about their aspirations and also those of the staff and pupils. We have designed nine academies now and each one is very different. For Thomas Deacon the demand was very clear: no grazing and all eating done in the refectory area."

OTHER AWARDS

Thomas Deacon scooped two awards and a commendation at the Education Business Awards.

TV presenter Philippa Forrester presented the school with the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Facility award for providing an outstanding, first-class environment for the teaching of the subject.

The School Building award beat schools across the country to be judged as having the most technically advanced school building. Deacon was also handed a commendation for demonstrating sound project management and procurement skills in completing development on time and to budget.

The academy has also won an international honour – the Education or Healthcare Structures award, courtesy of the Institution of Structural Engineers – at the Structural Awards 2008 in London.

THOMAS DEACON

Conceived as part of the Local Education Authority's city-wide reorganisation of secondary schools, the Academy merges the activities of two existing schools and one Community College to provide facilities for 2200 students aged between 11 and 19.

Sponsored by the Deacons Trust and Caterpillar (UK), the educational concept behind the Academy involves a specialism in Mathematics and Science and departs from a conventional model of secondary schooling in favour of a university type environment with lectures, seminars and tutorials.

To break down the scale of the building, the Academy is divided



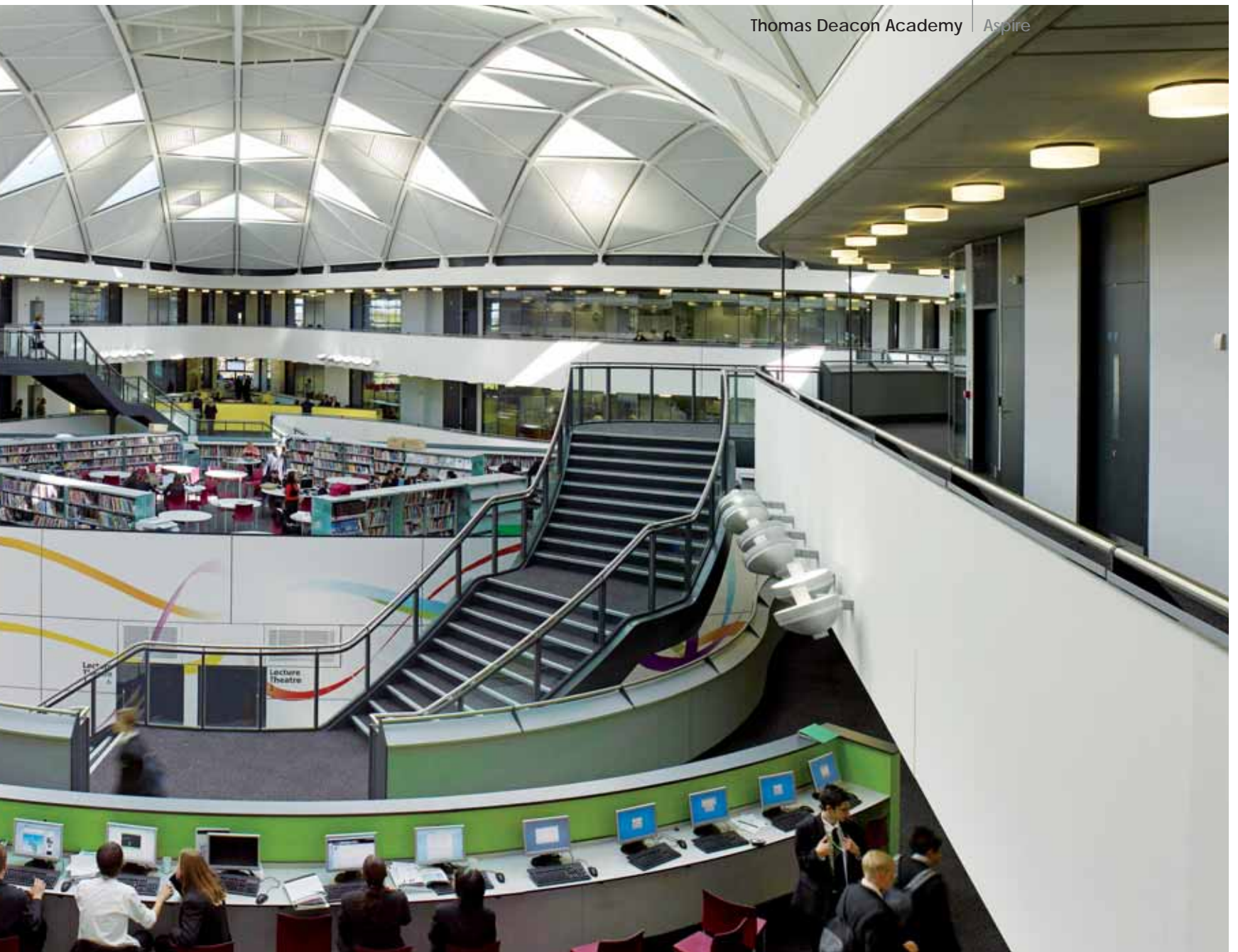
into six smaller units, one for each of the colleges that form the basis of the school's educational structure. Each college consists of a V-shaped ribbon of classrooms, which creates a three-storey central, sheltered space that is the heart of each college and key to the educational and design concept. Each college also has a Network Study Area for social interaction and collective study, allowing teaching staff to mix with the students and older students to mentor their younger colleagues, fostering a sense of community within the Academy.

Surrounded by mature trees and landscaping, the Academy has dual entrances that allow students, staff and visitors to enter at the western end of the building, accessible from the southern site entrances, with an additional student entrance to the north. These two entrances are linked by a central concourse, which directs circulation toward the central Resource Centre and social amenities and creates a natural focus for social interaction.

The undulating glass and steel structure roof over the central concourse unifies the architectural design while providing natural daylight, acoustical control and ventilation to the main space. It is hoped that the unique geometry and engineering of the roof will inspire students to reflect on the Academy's specialised subjects of Mathematics and Science.

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Above
Each college has a Network Study Area for social interaction and collective study, fostering a sense of community within the Academy