

# THE PUPILS' BRIEF

**“THIS IS THE FIRST  
TIME WE’VE BEEN  
ASKED WHAT  
WE THINK ABOUT  
OUR SCHOOL.”  
PUPIL CLIENT, 8**



# THE PUPILS' BRIEF

## What pupils want in their schools

**Over the last eight years, the Sorrell Foundation has asked thousands of school pupils what they want to improve in their schools. Their answers point to 'common issues' in school design, which include physical places or things such as dinner halls and uniforms, and operational issues like communication and sustainability. The common issues help to engage pupils in a discussion about everyday life in their school.**

In 2000 the Sorrell Foundation launched the joinedupdesignforschools programme, which was piloted with seven primary and secondary schools across the country. In the following years, an expanded version of the programme worked with over 100 schools, developing the joinedupdesignforschools model in which pupils work as a client team to create a design brief for an architect or designer. The process gives pupils a say in what happens in their school, and helps to develop personal skills such as teamwork, communication and decision-making.

The joinedupdesignforschools model is now helping to give pupils a voice in development projects under



the Building Schools for the Future and Primary Capital programmes. Each term, 1000 pupils visit the Sorrell Foundation Young Design Centre at Somerset House to take part in a series of workshops, explore the interactive What's Next For Schools? exhibition, go on an inspirational visit; they also carry out research in their local community.

Most importantly, pupils work in client teams to debate each common issue, noting what it is like in their school now, and proposing how things could be improved in future. This information produces the Pupils' Brief, a publication informing architects, head teachers and the local authority about the pupils' ideas.

Over 3000 pupils visited the Young Design Centre to see the What's Next For Schools? exhibition in its first year. The Sorrell Foundation is working with 50% of all local authorities currently undergoing school development projects, including Academies, Special Educational Needs schools and Pupil Referral Units in addition to mainstream schools.

---

## **THE COMMON ISSUES:**

---

**COLOUR**

---

**COMMUNICATION**

---

**DINNER HALLS**

---

**FURNITURE**

---

**INCLUSION**

---

**LEARNING SPACES**

---

**RECEPTIONS**

---

**REPUTATION & IDENTITY**

---

**SAFETY & SECURITY**

---

**SIXTH-FORM SPACES**

---

**SOCIAL SPACES**

---

**STORAGE**

---

**SUSTAINABILITY**

---

**TOILETS**

---

**UNIFORMS**

---



# COLOUR

## What pupils want in their schools

Warm and welcoming colours

Calming colours in learning spaces

Bright colours in social spaces

A consistent palette throughout the school building, logo and identity

Accent walls of brighter colours so they are not overpowering

Colour-coded navigation systems

**Falmouth Primary School, Falmouth + Kevin McCloud:** Kevin McCloud took inspiration from the coastal setting to create a versatile school hall with colourful lighting that can be adapted for assemblies and performances.



## COMMUNICATION

What pupils want in their schools

A clear, useful website

A way of emailing homework to teachers

Maps of the school to help visitors

Navigation routes and clear, consistent signage

Exhibitions to showcase their work to the local community

Message boards with information about special events

**Summerhill School, Dudley + Graphic Thought Facility:** Huge lettering in four languages helps pupils find their way and brightens up the school's breeze-block walls.



## DINNER HALLS

What pupils want in their schools

A calm, civilised lunch break

Good circulation and an efficient queuing system

Spaces to eat outside in good weather

A range of hot and cold food

Affordable, appetising healthy options

Good hygiene and plenty of bins

Different spaces for eating with friends or alone



**Acland Burghley School, London + SHH Architects:** Pupil clients asked SHH for a choice of indoor and outdoor places to relax and eat at break time.

**“IT HAD SUCH VIGOUR, LIFE AND ENTHUSIASM. IT WAS REALLY STIMULATING. IT WAS THE KEY THAT UNLOCKED THE PROCESS. THEIR BRIEF WAS HIGHLY INTELLIGENT, ALL ABOUT LIGHT, SPACE, ENVIRONMENT, EVEN ACOUSTIC SEPARATION. VERY PROFOUND.”**  
**KEITH PRIEST, ARCHITECT**



**Right:** Pupil client team for the new Isle of Sheppey Academy on the London Eye during an inspirational visit to London.



## **FURNITURE**

What pupils want in their schools

Strong, durable furniture that is vandal-resistant

Soft, comfortable sofas and beanbags in social spaces

Weatherproof chairs and benches in outdoor spaces

Dinner halls with a range of comfortable seats and easy-clean, sturdy tables

Classroom desks that are adaptable and easy to move, so they can be used in different arrangements

Effective window blinds to reduce glare on interactive whiteboards

Colourful, robust lockers with good security

**Heart of England School, Coventry + Eldridge Smerin:** Pupils want comfortable seating in strong materials and bold colours that will enhance their break times.



# INCLUSION

## What pupils want in their schools

People of all nationalities and abilities to feel welcome at their school

Furniture that is adjustable for wheelchairs, including specialist facilities like ICT

Consideration of people with a range of physical and sensory disabilities, not just wheelchair users

Ways to increase interaction between different age groups, so younger pupils do not feel intimidated

Cultural diversity celebrated by an international canteen menu

Signage in different languages to assist non-English speakers and help pupils learn

The choice of skirts or trousers for girls, and a PE kit they feel comfortable wearing

Pupils want everyone to feel welcome and able to get the most out of schools.

**Above:** Skoolrush, the web game at Swanlea School, East London, in which a player can choose to be a character in a wheelchair.

**Below:** A pupil client from Woodside Inclusive Learning Campus, Haringey, enjoys a visit to the V&A Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green.



## LEARNING SPACES

What pupils want in their schools

Spaces that inspire them to learn

Good acoustics so they can hear the teacher properly

Flexible learning spaces that enable group work

Lots of ICT facilities

Calming colours

Plenty of storage

**Mounts Bay School, Penzance + Phin Manasseh:** This landmark building provides a flexible space to showcase achievements in arts and performance.



## RECEPTIONS

What pupils want in their schools

A welcoming, friendly atmosphere

Comfortable seating

An exhibition area to display work that pupils are proud of

Maps of the school to help visitors find their way

Good security

A regularly updated message board



**Camden School for Girls, London + Thomas Heatherwick:** This proposal for a landmark entrance to the school would make a proud statement and help people to locate the reception.

**“THEY’VE BEEN ACTING AS THE CLIENT TO PROFESSIONALS, ENGAGING IN ALL SORTS OF DIALOGUES AND PROCESSES, CONSULTING WITH OUR STAFF, GOVERNORS, STUDENTS. THE SKILLS THAT THEY’VE USED IN THIS ARE PHENOMENAL.”**  
**HEAD TEACHER**



**Right:** Pupil clients from Falmouth School at a site meeting with the contractors and architects Urban Salon, in their new Design and Technology extension.



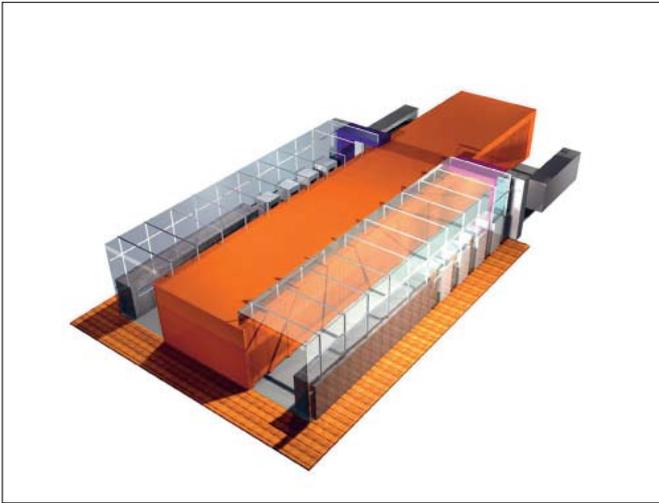
## REPUTATION & IDENTITY

What pupils want in their schools

- A way of showing they are proud of their school
- Something that says the school is special and unique
- Good relations with the local community
- Exhibitions of school work and certificates
- Ways to invite the local community into the school to share the facilities

### **Hugh Myddelton Primary School, London + ArthurSteenAdamson:**

A new logo and identity is based around freshwater animals and the formula  $H_2O$ , referring to Hugh Myddelton's role in bringing clean water to Victorian London.



# SAFETY & SECURITY

What pupils want in their schools

Security measures that are effective without looking oppressive

Reliable and secure storage for personal belongings and bicycles

Somewhere to report or discuss bullying in confidence

A secure reception area that oversees who comes into the school

Open, airy toilets with full-length cubicles and urinal screens, monitored by staff for bullying and vandalism

Social spaces where pupils will not stand out if they are on their own



**Barlow Roman Catholic High School, Manchester + JudgeGill:** These vandal-proof toilets have a semi-translucent outer wall and are monitored by teachers, helping to address bullying, vandalism and smoking.



## SIXTH-FORM SPACES

What pupils want in their schools

A sixth form that is distinct but still part of the school

Separate spaces for quiet study, relaxing and socialising

Somewhere that feels grown-up and inviting

Facilities to prepare food and hot drinks

Smart, comfortable furniture

A way of announcing the presence of the sixth form

**Heart of England School, Coventry + Eldridge Smerin:** This brightly coloured bridge helps to make the sixth form attractive to potential applicants, providing extra study space and disabled access from the main building.



## **SOCIAL SPACES**

What pupils want in their schools

Outdoor spaces with shelter from wind, rain and sun

Separate spaces for relaxing or being energetic

Plenty of seating

No corners where bullying can happen

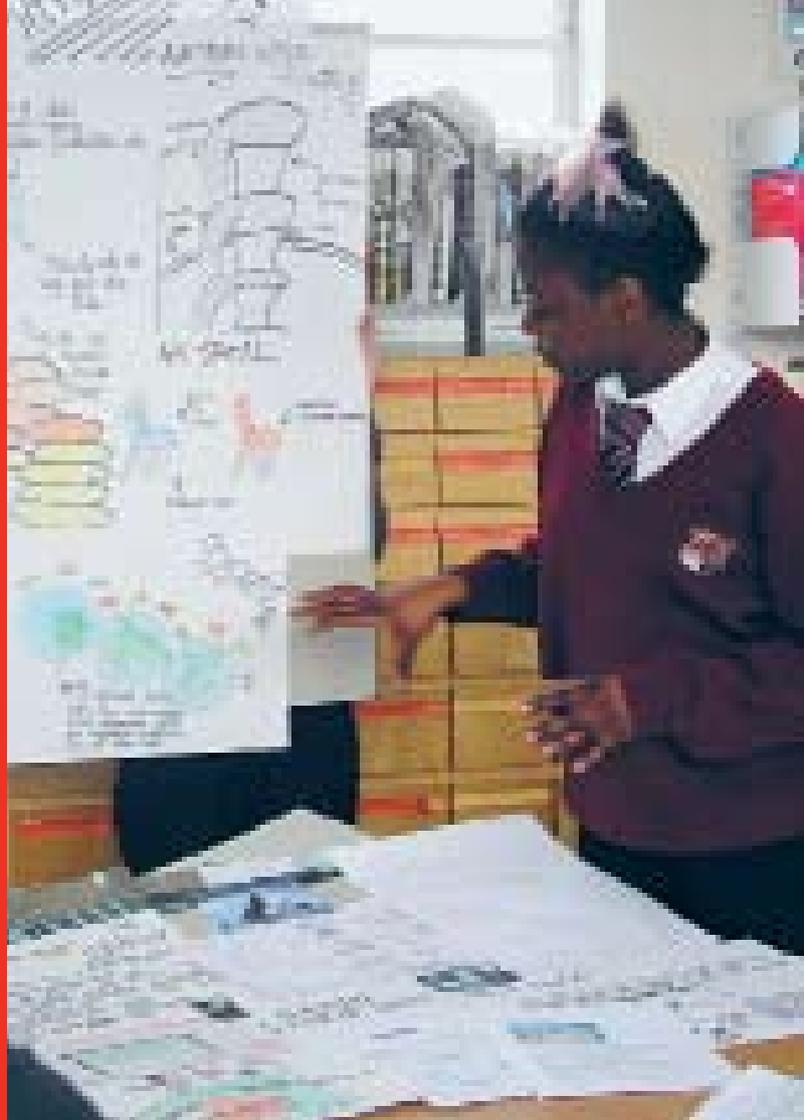
ICT facilities to help with schoolwork

A range of activities for different ages and interests

**Treviglas Community College, Newquay + Marks Barfield Architects:**

A woven wooden structure provides a sheltered outdoor space for relaxation, eating and socialising at lunch times.

**“I’LL BE FEELING  
VERY PROUD OF MY  
INVOLVEMENT. IT  
WILL BE LIKE: ‘WOW,  
LOOK WHAT I’VE  
HELPED WITH, LOOK  
WHAT I’VE DONE.’ IT’S  
RAISED MY MORALE  
AND IT’S RAISED  
THE MORALE OF THE  
REST OF THE TEAM.”  
PUPIL CLIENT, 14**



**Right:** Pupil client presents the team's brief to the designer.



## STORAGE

What pupils want in their schools

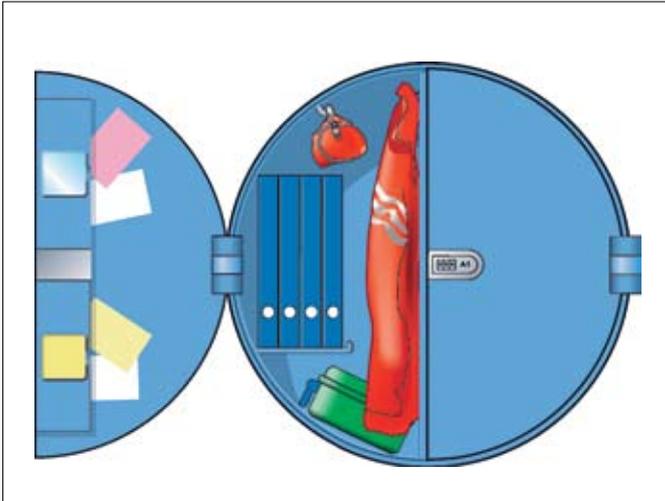
Lockers that can fit a bag, coat, PE kit and books

Lockers that don't obstruct corridors and other circulation spaces

Strong units that can't be broken into

Accessible lockers that are not too high or low, not in locked rooms, or in rooms used for teaching

Appropriate storage for specialist equipment like musical instruments



**Plumstead Manor School, south-east London + Priestman Goode:**

Pupil clients asked for attractive storage units to hold a bag, coat and PE kit, with good security and ways of personalising the locker.



# SUSTAINABILITY

## What pupils want in their schools

Efficient heating, lighting and electricity systems

Plenty of recycling bins for paper, tins and plastic

A bright, secure bike shed to encourage cycling

Ways of learning about green issues through schoolwork and poster campaigns

Natural, sustainable materials used in the building and furnishings

Green spaces to support plants and wildlife

**Falmouth School, Cornwall + Urban Salon:** The school's new design and technology block is a teaching-tool for sustainability. The materials used in the building include rolled zinc metal cladding, which has low energy manufacturing requirements and is recyclable; solid laminated timber, which has the lowest-energy consumption of any building material; rubber-based roofing products that are less toxic than PVC alternatives and require less energy to manufacture; and lime-based render that is produced at lower temperatures than cement, requiring less energy and resulting in less CO<sub>2</sub> output.



## TOILETS

What pupils want in their schools

Hygienic and well-maintained facilities

Good ventilation to keep them fresh

Lots of natural light, with large frosted windows

Door locks and good acoustics for privacy

No corners where bullying can happen

Monitoring through CCTV or regular checks

### **Barlow Roman Catholic High School, Manchester + JudgeGill:**

The easy-clean surfaces and vibrant colours of these toilets respond to the pupil clients' request for cheerful facilities with high standards of hygiene.



# UNIFORMS

What pupils want in their schools

A smart, comfortable uniform that is modern not trendy

Something affordable and hard-wearing

A uniform the pupils can be proud of

Clothes that can be adapted for hot or cold weather

A way of showing different form groups and prefect status

A choice of skirts or trousers for girls

**Aldercar Community Language College, Nottingham + Paul Smith:**

Paul Smith designed a contemporary uniform that is cost-effective, durable and comfortable – and capable of lasting through different fashion trends.

**“IT’S AMAZING THAT  
AFTER ALL THIS  
TIME IT’S ACTUALLY  
HAPPENING, AFTER  
ALL WE’VE DONE  
IT’S GOING UP, ALL  
OUR IDEAS ARE  
COMING TOGETHER.”  
PUPIL CLIENT**



**Right:** Pupil clients for The City Academy, Hackney, at a site meeting with the contractors and Studio E architects.



# IMPACT, BENEFITS & LEGACY

## **For pupils and schools:**

Pupils develop a range of new skills, becoming more confident and engaged in school life

Head teachers, governors and school management teams encounter a fresh way of thinking about school design and recognise the value their pupils bring to the conversation

Implemented designs allow pupils to leave their own legacy

## **For the design industry and government:**

The design industry is linked to the education sector in a way that benefits the government's investment in rebuilding and refurbishing the country's schools estate

The model has the potential to create a body of consumers with a greater understanding of the benefits of design

Photography and image credits:

© Magnus Anderson, © Jose Anies, © Marks Barfield, © Etienne Bol,  
© Graham Carlow, © Simon Cook, © Michael Crockett, © Fritz Curzon,  
© Deepend, © Priestman Goode, © Graphic Thought Facility, © JudgeGill,  
© Peter Hamilton, © Line One, © Phineas Manasseh, © Sarah Murphy,  
© Eldridge Smerin, © Urban Salon, © Nick Wood

Design by Studio8 Design

© The Sorrell Foundation 2008

The Sorrell Foundation  
Young Design Centre  
Somerset House, Strand  
London WC2R 1LA  
United Kingdom  
T: 020 7845 5860  
[www.thesorrellfoundation.com](http://www.thesorrellfoundation.com)

