



Refurbished neighbourhood nursery



Nursery garden



Transition from inside to outside space



Covered walkways

Rachel McMillan Nursery School Deptford, London

At the beginning of the twentieth century, sisters Margaret and Rachel McMillan established the first nursery school in the UK, designed to halt the high levels of infant death and illness in Deptford, South East London. The design was based on the principles of fresh air, creative play and healthy food with each shelter (classroom) opening out onto a shared play area via an open canopy.

Alexander Sedgley were contacted by the school because of their local reputation in nursery school design. The school were keen to understand how their school could develop and to understand the impact of a new building on the adjacent site, the site of the McMillan College. This development was to build 1,000 student bedrooms. After much discussion on the new building, compromises were made and more importantly a Section 106 Agreement was granted which would enable the school to realise some of its development and refurbishment plans.

The main desires of the school and the London Borough of Greenwich were:

- to link all areas by a covered walkway and steps to the lower area;
- to create a new central hall;
- to improve the entrance;
- to create extended day care for younger children;
- to deal with all backlog by maintenance;
- to create an archive to the memory of the McMillan sisters and their achievements.

The first phase of this work, the neighbourhood nursery, was completed in June 2004 and provides a safe environment for children from six months to 3 years old prior to going into the main nursery. The refurbished and extended building has its own garden design by Watkins Dally. The next stage was to reposition the school office, head teacher's office and staff room to adjacent main entrance to improve security to the school and free up space for the archive and an improved parents room. All canopies have been extended and linked to provide a continuous dry walkway.

By 2007, the school was returned to its position as one of the most important education buildings in the UK.

Main Contractor: Axis Europe
Structural Engineer: AA Gibbons
Landscape Architect: Watkins Dally
Services Engineer: Bailey Associates
Quantity Surveyor: Cook and Butler