

# Western Cape school a landmark project

The Bongoletu Primary School in Philippi in Cape Town had proved a landmark project not just for the 1,300 children who are currently enrolled there, but also for pupils across the province who would benefit from the many lessons learnt and milestones that were reached during its construction.



The school was designed by an architectural team from Revel Fox & Partners Architects and Planners, with the bricks supplied by Corobrik.

Christie van Niekerk, Corobrik manager Western Cape, said an out-of-the-box design approach coupled with quality building materials, such as Corobrik Kirstenbosch Travertine facebrick had delivered a low maintenance and comfortable learning facility with the longevity to serve children for generations to come.

## Speeding up delivery

Revel Fox & Partners Architects and Planners spokesperson, Mark Meyer, explained that the design of the Bongoletu Primary School is the latest in an on-going attempt to develop a consistent conceptual model for new schools in the Western Cape. In addition to speeding up delivery and conforming to a standard brief and strict budget, this standard model addressed the similar contexts and challenges faced by most children in the area. These include the harsh climatic conditions in the Cape Flats and social ills associated with the informal settlements from which many of the learners come. The new school replaced an ad-hoc collection of flood-prone classrooms and prefabs.

According to Kobus Stofberg, specialist architect for the Western Cape Directorate of Education Works, it has become a landmark in an area. "We are committed to providing essential education services to the community based on research into relevant design requirements related to user needs. The final product exemplifies how we see primary school design for current and future projects. The school has had an extremely positive response from the users and community. It is a landmark building and not only upgrades the surrounding area but also provides a much needed oasis for young children to start and enjoy formal education."

## Review of completed schools

Meyer said that a self-critical review of the work at previously completed schools proved to be fruitful when designing Bongoletu Primary School. Given the palpable need for a statement of social dignity and permanence and the need for a protected and protective learning environment, architects came up with a contemporary re-interpretation of the mediaeval cloister. "The school comprises a central focal element flanked on either side by cloistered courtyards. The central building addresses the street and contains the main entrance, the assembly hall, administration, staffroom, media and computer centres as well as other shared facilities. It is independently accessible for community use.

"The courtyards, with their inner encircling verandas tie the repetitive classroom modules into a unified whole, secure from without and sheltering within. The courts and verandas and their linking staircases and galleries form positive, interactive gathering spaces which add to the interest and diversity conducive to a responsive learning environment," Meyer said. For cost reasons, the structural system and formal language was kept rigorously simple. Sustainability issues were addressed with the emphasis being on providing ample natural lighting and cross-ventilation.

Finishes are limited to affordable, low maintenance materials - red Kirstenbosch Travertine face brick and painted bagged brick externally, plaster and paint internally, vinyl and power floated floors, aluminium windows, unpainted galvanised metalwork and sheet metal roofing. Detailing, although robust and straightforward, was nevertheless intended to add interest and texture.

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