

Makeover for morale



Eight months after being snubbed for relocation, Jeff Bownds discusses the boost in morale received by a college in Devon, and the benefits that modular construction can provide in the public building sector.

Clyst Vale Community College has received, 'a value for money makeover that has been hugely beneficial to the personal development of the staff and students and given a tremendous morale boost to the college community.' Only eight months earlier Principal Dr Kevin Bawn had been feeling somewhat less upbeat when he received news that a relocation plan for the entire college had been shelved.

Clyst Vale daily accommodates around 1,000 students and 140 staff and had been expecting to relocate to a new community development for several years. Because of this the teaching and management staff had continued to accept the inconvenience of operating from a collection of old temporary classrooms that had been sited around the main school building for many years.

When the relocation project was side-lined the college was left with a campus that included seven outdated, energy inefficient buildings that would not last much longer without major refurbishment work. Ann Hopkins, the college's buildings manager, who, together with the school governors were the driving force to 'bring the school's building stock into the 21st Century,' came up with a plan that the local education authority approved very quickly.

Project essentials

Instead of refurbishing the old temporary buildings, Devon County Council agreed to a capital investment of £2.27m to the college for the immediate supply of new accommodation. NPS, the property design and construction company appointed Neath Abbey based Wernick Buildings to supply four new modular

buildings that were delivered in just eight months, with planning permission included in this time. This was an incredible feat that was recognized by the college at the opening ceremony.

The 57 modules that comprise the buildings were delivered to the agreed schedule, giving the college 18 new, larger than normal classrooms for teaching English, Music, Performing Arts, Mathematics and ICT. The 6th Form also has a meeting room and a careers library in one of the new buildings. In addition, the buildings incorporate 17 smaller rooms that are equipped as offices, toilets or storerooms.

The adjacent music and drama rooms were fitted with sound proofing, factory prepared sprung floors and four smaller practice rooms in the music department. In addition the co-

location of curriculum areas has supported effective teaching and learning, but above all has greatly enhanced departmental communication and management. What has been achieved has lifted the college community tremendously and given attractive piazza areas between the new developments that are well used by students at breaks and lunch-times.

The big benefits

Had the four new buildings been constructed using traditional methods, the development would have taken a minimum of 12 months to complete. The greatly reduced on site building time that modular construction affords is particularly important in a high density area, and must therefore reduce the potential for accidents proportionally.

On site disruption is kept to an absolute minimum with this type of construction; a major consideration at a school, college or university. Amongst other eco-factors that are high priorities is the long life and recyclability of the galvanized steel framed modular units and much-reduced noise and pollution around the site.

Modular construction is also more cost-effective, being up to 50% faster to complete because the majority of building work is completed at the factory. Factory controlled fabrication also greatly reduces the incidence of damage on site, because there is less time for vandalism and superior quality control standards are able to be applied. Factory construction also gives considerably less waste than traditional methods of construction making it a highly sustainable form of building.

Modular construction also guarantees a more dependable build programme, because factory built module production is not affected by bad weather conditions on site and the



Modular buildings for schools and colleges can be given a traditional look



building's foundations and main structure are prepared simultaneously. Then there is a short delivery window to site (usually between one to three days) and after that work continues, much of it under cover, inside the building.

Good looking morale lift

Principal Dr Kevin Bawn said of his modular building project: "In the middle of all this building activity we had an Ofsted inspection, but all went well, not least because of the tremendous co-operation between all the companies involved in the development, and Ann Hopkins.

"The completed buildings are well constructed and blend into the landscape, keeping the 'village' feel to the school grounds. I am both happy and relieved; I would never have guessed that such a large building project, with an inspection taking place in the middle of it, could have gone so smoothly and looked so good."

■ Jeff Bownds is PR & marketing manager at Wernick Group

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English Department classroom