

Celebrating  
Success





**3,000**  
Pupil places provided so far...



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## In challenging financial times, we are committed to support pupils to achieve the best education possible.

**Bedford Borough Council became a unitary authority in April 2009, as part of a series of local government reorganisations across the country.**

It is as a unitary authority, we are responsible for all local government functions within our geographical boundaries – which includes education.

To achieve the step-change that was desired we needed to address three problems.

First, we needed better space. This was because of years of under-investment by the Council which meant that many schools were working with wholly inadequate accommodation, including a plethora of temporary and mobile classrooms.

Second, we needed to provide more space. This was because the population of Bedford was (and is) growing. This growth in population numbers was putting significant pressure on class sizes and the overall capacities of schools.

Third, we had to do more with less. Bedford Borough Council were due to receive £326m

through 'Building Schools for the Future' but unfortunately this funding stream was withdrawn in 2010.

Therefore, we needed better space, more of it and for less money than was 'normal.' It was clear that the council had to do something drastically different.

This report celebrates the success that Bedford Borough Council has had in solving our education property problems. We have achieved this by watching the pennies and setting difficult challenges that we have worked through with a team of experts. I am sure you will agree, we are now in much better place to help our young people succeed too.

*Dave Hodgson*

Mayor of Bedford Borough Council





“The pupils take a real pride in their new buildings, and this is reflected in their positive approaches to lessons.”

Mrs Headland, Headteacher  
Cotton End Lower School

## Remarkable progress achieved by Bedford Borough’s schools in recent years

### Increasing demands to deliver more with less

“The remarkable progress achieved by Bedford Borough’s schools in recent years has been confirmed in emphatic fashion by the most recent Ofsted inspection figures (Watchsted) which consistently rank Bedford Borough as one of the top 10 best places in the country for Lower and Primary schools.

The ranking is based on the proportion of children attending good or outstanding Lower/Primary schools, with a massive 94.7% of children reported as being in such schools in Bedford Borough in May 2015.

To have so many schools judged as good or outstanding by Ofsted is a real achievement.” (Bedford Borough Council report to Executive, 12th February 2014).

Bedford Borough Council is fully committed to retaining our position as the best education authority in the country. In order to maintain, and indeed improve the way we educate our young people, we have to work with the best people. This report shows how we have made a £35m budget pressure into a success story that delivers the 35% cost savings demanded by central government of any public body procuring construction works. It also shows how we are delivering on the promise to provide permanent buildings rather than temporary mobile classrooms to educate our young people.

Rising pupil numbers, reflecting a population growth of 0.7% for every year between 2001 and 2013 has placed significant strain on our schools. Equally, the legacy of temporary mobile classrooms and a high maintenance

backlog meant that many teaching spaces were wholly unsuitable for the modern age and curriculum. Finally, the estimated capital cost to put matters right was £85m but the budget was just £51m. The schemes were delivered on time and on budget.

In challenging financial times, we are all committed to supporting pupils in Bedford Borough to achieve the best education possible, guided by the principles of strengthening partnerships. The council will always work hard to make the best use of finite resources for building and improving schools.

### Strong partnerships, outstanding results

The council’s vision is that every child should be educated in outstanding quality teaching and learning space. Equally, every school staff member should be able to work in buildings that do not get in the way of the overall aim of raising standards of teaching and learning.

Clearly, this was a significant challenge given that demand for funds far exceeded the available supply. At this point, the council decided to change the way it sought bidders for construction schemes and turned to Scape Group. Scape is a public sector owned built environment specialist offering a full suite of national frameworks and innovative design solutions. All Scape contracts are already fully compliant with OJEU regulations.

Bedford Borough Council now procures all of its school construction schemes in partnership with Scape. Initially, the schemes were based on Scape’s system build technology and used in delivering 420 new place schools plus a 30 place nursery at both Great Denham and

Shortsdown Primary schools. Further schemes benefited from Scape’s innovative pre-designed solutions such as ConnectEd and Sunesis, through to the new off-site manufactured ConnectUp.

This report looks at a number of the schemes in detail, from single classrooms through to complete new schools. All the schools report a better working environment and atmosphere, with delighted Headteachers, staff, parents and pupils. The report also looks at the additional benefits achieved for the wider community as much of the budget has been spent locally, meaning a noteworthy boost to the local economy and improved training and employment opportunities for the community.

Other schools within the borough will soon benefit from similar solutions, as we continue our programme of replacing inadequate and inappropriate school buildings. We are confident that these schools will enjoy the same successes that have been achieved so far, and be able to teach in modern, flexible and exciting buildings.

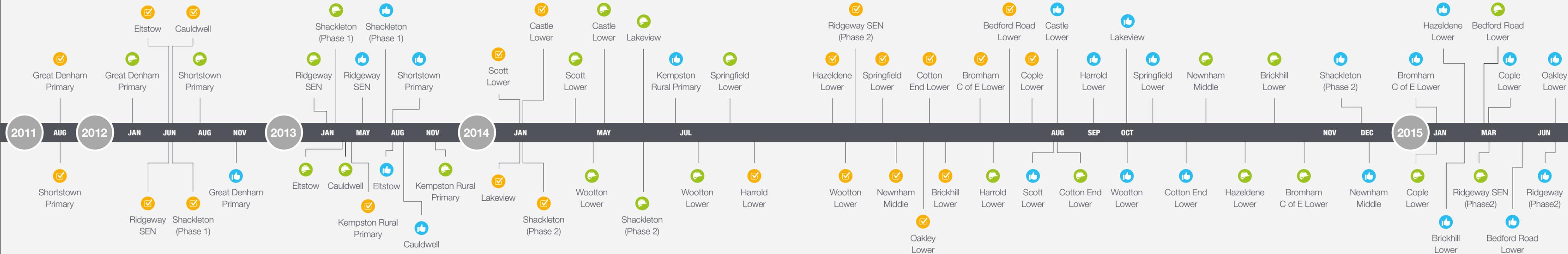
We would like to thank Scape Group for its support in helping to deliver the outstanding results that have been achieved to date. And most importantly we would like to thank teachers and pupils for bringing our vision to life.

# TIMELINE

ACHIEVEMENTS  
2011-2015



On track to deliver  
**420** places  
by 2016



**KEY**

- 23 Projects at Design & Cost
- 23 Projects On Site
- 23 Projects Complete



On track to deliver  
**1,380** places  
by 2017





KPIs

1,142  
PUPILS WENT ON  
SITE VISITS

This equals  
100 pupil visits  
to each school



231  
APPRENTICE WEEKS

Helping young adults to take the next step into the construction industry

APPRENTICES



122  
WORK EXPERIENCE WEEKS

Allowing 9-14 year olds the chance to explore options for their future

WORK EXPERIENCE



3,000  
TOTAL PUPIL PLACES  
PROVIDED SO FAR

PUPIL PLACES

“Plenty of display space, lots of storage and great access to the outdoors. No need for ramps, so access for persons with disabilities or mobility difficulties is no problem whatsoever.”

Mrs Headland, Headteacher  
Cotton End Lower School

KPIs



£1 local spend equates to £3 retained in the local economy



£18M LOCAL SPEND = **£54m** RETAINED IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY

LOCAL SPEND



“ PARENTS ARE QUEUING UP TO **VOLUNTEER** TO HELP AT THESE GREAT SCHOOLS”

PARENT INTERACTION



EVERY SCHOOL HAS THE **HIGHEST POSSIBLE ENERGY RATING WITH AN EPC OF A**

ENERGY PERFORMANCE

“The overall design allows different teaching styles, as there is ample space to arrange furniture in differing ways, or use carpet time for story telling or briefing children at the start of each session.”

Mrs Corrinne Royden, Headteacher  
Harrold Lower School



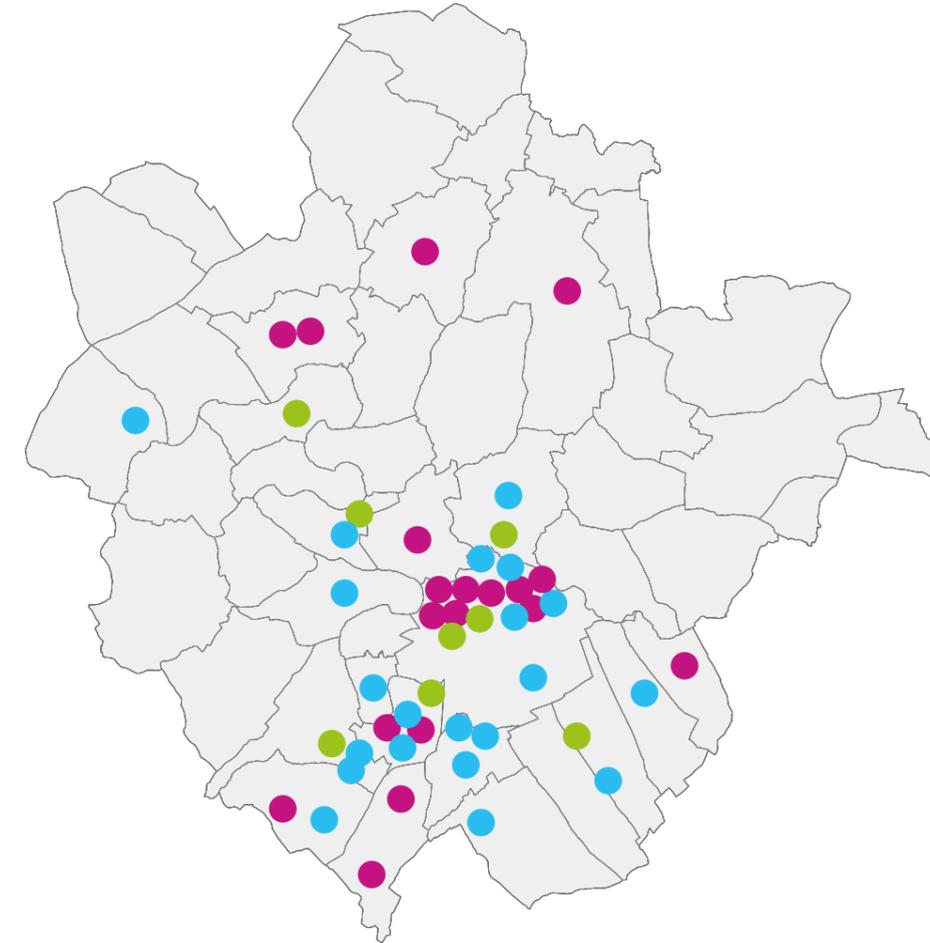
KPIs

Calmer new classbase

=

Increased concentration

PUPIL PLACES PROVIDED SO FAR, WITH MORE ON THE WAY



PUPIL PLACES

KEY

3,000 PLACES COMPLETE

1,200 PLACES UNDER DESIGN

1,800 PLACES FUTURE SCHEME

6,000 PLACES TOTAL

*“The acoustics are excellent, and children have responded to this by showing increased levels of concentration and attention to their lessons.”*

Mrs Angela Stanbridge, Headteacher  
Kempston Rural School

# PROJECTS

## See the successes and evidence from our school visits



### CASE STUDY

## Springfield Lower School

**Mrs Marianne Allen,**  
Headteacher

#### REQUIREMENT

The previous space was far too cramped, leading to an unsatisfactory teaching environment for both the Year 1/2 and Reception classes. The school is facing significant pressures from rising pupil numbers so the extra classbase has provided welcome relief from pressure on space.

#### SOLUTION

The school now has a single Connect classroom that is used to provide additional accommodation for Year 1/2 pupils. Previously, these children were taught in a sectioned-off area of the Reception classbase.

#### HANDOVER

The new classroom was handed over to the school in October 2014, and has been in full use since that date.

#### The new accommodation has many benefits:

- The headteacher describes it as perfect in every way, being an entirely self-sufficient teaching space. This view was enthusiastically endorsed by the class teacher and support assistant.

#### There is plenty of display space available, meaning that the classroom is very colourful and exciting.

- There are excellent acoustics throughout. This means that teaching staff do not have to raise or strain their voices, and children are able to fully participate in lessons.
- The school team feel the windows are wonderful. These have been fitted with blinds to reduce solar glare especially when using the teaching wall and IT equipment. Nevertheless, the floor to ceiling design is very helpful for children of this age (5 and 6 years old).
- There is plenty of display space available, meaning that the classroom is very colourful and exciting.
- Underfloor heating works well, following initial teething problems with the electrical supply. Furthermore, the heating aids carpet time, as the floor does not feel damp or cold and frees up wall space with the absence of radiators.

#### Feedback from the school team:

- The headteacher reported that the children are much calmer in their new classbase, and more able to concentrate on their lessons. Equally, the space is great for teachers and support staff compared with what went before.



**“The children are much calmer in their new classbase, and more able to concentrate on their lessons.”**

**Mrs Marianne Allen, Headteacher, Springfield Lower School**



**Excellent acoustics... teaching staff do not have to raise or strain their voices, and children are able to fully participate in lessons.**

CASE STUDY

# Cotton End Lower School

**Mrs Karen Headland,**  
Headteacher

**REQUIREMENT**

The school has expanded and is extremely popular with parents. The previous mobile classrooms had been on site for up to 20 years, were well past their sell by date, and displayed all the problems associated with such temporary accommodation.

**SOLUTION**

The school has been provided with four Connect classrooms including a pre-school Connect to provide for rising pupil numbers and to replace dilapidated mobiles, that have been on site for a number of years. The school roll has risen from about 40 to well over 100 pupils in recent years, as a result of nearby housing growth and the popularity of the school.

**HANDOVER**

The final phase was handed over to the school in October 2014, and has been in full use since that date.

**The new accommodation has many benefits:**

- "It is bright, airy and welcoming, leading to a perfect teaching environment." – Mrs Karen Headland, Headteacher. The floor to ceiling windows are particularly helpful in bringing the outdoors in to the classrooms.



- The pupils take a real pride in their new buildings, and this is reflected in their positive approaches to lessons.

**There is plenty of display space, lots of storage and great access to the outdoors.**

- The underfloor heating works very well, so much so that pupils either wear slippers or walk around in bare feet. Carpet time for reading stories and so on is easily accommodated as the floor does not feel cold or damp as was the case in the old mobile classrooms.

- IT provision is greatly improved, as the walls are strong enough to carry touchscreen displays. This was not the case in the mobile classrooms, meaning that teachers struggled to utilise the latest technology.
- There is plenty of display space, lots of storage and great access to the outdoors. There is no need for ramps, so access for people with disabilities or mobility difficulties is no problem whatsoever.

**The pupils take a real pride in their new buildings, and this is reflected in their positive approaches to lessons.**

- The foyer to each classroom is spacious, providing an area for coats and enough space for breakout teaching and one-to-one support. No longer do pupils need to have individual sessions in inappropriate spaces such as the staff room or the headteacher's office.
- The toilets are ideal, both spacious and easy to keep clean.

**Feedback from the school team and parents:**

- The headteacher has received very positive feedback from parents. In fact, the pre-school facility is heavily oversubscribed, with well over 30 applications for just 15 places in 2015/16.

**"She's loving the new classroom and learning environment."**

Parent of pupil

**"It is bright, airy and welcoming, leading to a perfect teaching environment."**

Pre-school teacher



CASE STUDY

# Ridgeway School

**Mr Graham Allard,**  
Headteacher

**REQUIREMENT**

Previously, the post-16 unit was housed in traditional mobile classrooms and these were inadequate in many ways for the purpose in which they were being used.

**SOLUTION**

The new Connect accommodation provides a dedicated post-16 unit at this thriving special school. It approximates to around three Connect classbases and has been specially configured internally to provide two classrooms, bathrooms and a large open area that serves as a teaching space, social space, kitchen area and many other things.

**HANDOVER**

It has been open since August 2013. Currently, there are 14 pupils and 9 staff in this unit but that will rise to 22 pupils in September 2015.

**Previous issues:**

- Ramped access was difficult to manage given the significant number of pupils using wheelchairs or walking aids. The journey between the main school and the mobiles took too long and was especially difficult in wet or icy conditions.
- They were too hot in summer and too cold in winter.
- IT provision was very limited.
- The lack of space made it very difficult to deliver a variety of teaching styles or support mechanisms for pupils with such a wide variety of individual needs. The lack of storage for mechanical aids such as standing frames, wheelchairs and other specialised equipment exacerbated this problem.

**Access is greatly improved... This enables some pupils to be much more independent during the school day.**



**The new accommodation has many benefits:**

- Access is greatly improved, with no ramps. This enables some pupils to be much more independent during the school day.
- The underfloor heating system is great, as are the floor to ceiling windows.
- The bathroom and toilet facilities are very good, with the appropriate space. However, future designs could reflect the need for double sinks or medical sinks as standard sinks are not ideal in a special school.
- The large open area is used for a variety of activities. The class teacher, Michelle, noted that the kitchen area has transformed the group dynamics as all pupils have a chance to participate. She also noted that those pupils who need their individual space could be easily supported as they can partially withdraw but without detriment to the larger group. It was clear how much the pupils enjoyed this area.

**Feedback from the school team:**

- The headteacher noted that the pupils said "Wow, look at what we've got." He felt that it helped the pupils feel better about their lives, because someone had invested time and money in them.

**"Wow, look at what we've got."**

Pupils, Ridgeway School

**"The kitchen area has transformed the group dynamics as all pupils have a chance to participate."**

Michelle, class teacher, Ridgeway School



CASE STUDY

# Harrold Lower School

**Mrs Corrinne Royden,**  
Headteacher

**REQUIREMENT**

The previous double mobile classroom displayed all the problems associated with such inappropriate accommodation. They were too cold in winter and too hot in summer. They were cramped, and led to a lack of flexibility in teaching styles or furniture layout. IT provision was limited as the walls were not strong enough to bear the weight of any significant touchscreens or boards.

**SOLUTION**

The school has a new three class Connect solution. Two of the classes replace an old double mobile classroom, and one standalone class provides a pre-school facility that was previously using the nearby village hall.

**HANDOVER**

Work was completed in September 2014, and the new accommodation has been in use since that date. The two-class block currently houses the youngest children within school, Reception and Year 1 children, with a pre-school facility in the single classroom.

**The new accommodation has many benefits:**

- The overall design allows different teaching styles as there is ample space to arrange furniture in differing ways, or use carpet time for story telling or briefing children at the start of each session.
- The underfloor heating works very well, and children take off their shoes and sometimes their socks, as the floor is comfortably warm. This degree of comfort also aids carpet time.
- Access to the outside is greatly improved, as the floor to ceiling windows give great lines of sight and this makes supervision so much easier. These very young pupils are able to play outside, within a fenced area and move easily in and out of the building.

- Equally, the absence of any need for access ramps means that entry and exit is very easy.
- The headteacher commented on the wonderful light levels and the feeling of volume – very different to that experienced in the mobile classrooms.
- There is great display space, with many colourful examples of the children’s work.
- The pupil toilets are very good, although there was a suggestion that the taps were a bit stiff for such young children. Nevertheless, the toilet area was easy to keep clean and there was no hint of any unpleasant smells.
- The spacious foyer, as has been seen elsewhere in Bedford schools, provides room for both coats and serves as a breakout space for children needing one-to-one support, or just a bit of space away from

a busy classroom. Such sessions were happening in these spaces at the time of my visit whereas, previously, the staff would have needed to use the headteacher’s office, the staffroom or any other available space.

**The Connect design provides personal space adjacent to the main classrooms so no child needs to feel stigmatised or different just because they may need some dedicated teaching support.**

- IT provision is much better, meaning that teachers can use it to play a full part in lessons.

**Feedback from the school team and parents:**

- The headteacher, class teachers and teaching assistants are absolutely delighted with the new accommodation which, to quote the headteacher has “totally transformed the way we do things.” Another teacher commented that it was like moving from the 1930s into the 21st century.
- Parental support and comments have been very positive.

- The headteacher commented on behalf of the pre-school, noting that they were equally delighted with their new facility. One particular benefit of having a dedicated base was that they could now concentrate on teaching and learning, rather than spend time at the end of each session packing away equipment so that the village hall could be used for other activities.

**One particular benefit of having a dedicated base was that they could now concentrate on teaching and learning.**



**“It was like moving from the 1930s into the 21st century.”**

**Teacher, Harrold Lower School**

**“The new accommodation has totally transformed the way we do things.”**

**Mrs Corrinne Royden, Headteacher, Harrold Lower School**



**Access to the outside is greatly improved, as the floor to ceiling windows give great lines of sight and this makes supervision so much easier.**



**CASE STUDY**

# Kempston Rural School

**Mrs Angela Stanbridge,**  
Headteacher

**REQUIREMENT**

This expansion replaces a much smaller school located about a mile away from the new site. The school was in need of expansion to serve both an existing community and families from a significant adjacent housing development.

**SOLUTION**

A two form-entry (FE) Sunesis Keynes school that can accommodate 420 pupils and has a nursery facility.

**HANDOVER**

This wonderful new building was handed over to the school in July 2014, and has been in use since that date. The school is gradually expanding to 2FE from the bottom up – in other words, the increased intake is largely only reflected in the youngest age groups.

**The new accommodation has many benefits:**

- The sheer scale of the building is almost breathtaking. High ceilings in the learning street, large windows and rooflights, and the bi-folding doors at each end give a feeling of volume and space with terrific light levels.
- The headteacher was able to request some internal design amendments such as access to pupil toilets, and increasing the size of her office. These amendments have worked particularly well.
- The acoustics are excellent, and children have responded to this by showing increased levels of concentration and attention to their lessons.
- The learning street is a wonderful asset to the school. Pupils are encouraged to develop independent learning styles by

moving between the classrooms and the learning street, all within a safe and secure environment. The learning street enables them to take responsibility for their own learning, while observing and learning from what is going on around them. In effect, it is a natural extension of their classroom, giving those that want it, or can cope with it, a degree of freedom.

- Furthermore, the dedicated cooking area has enabled staff to raise the profile of this topic and, in fact, this part of the curriculum has changed out of all recognition with what happened previously. In the past, the school was limited to cooking lessons using a microwave oven. The pupils are now able to cook cakes, biscuits and such like. The cookery area has also proved a boost for the After-School Club.



**The acoustics are excellent, and children have responded to this by showing increased levels of concentration and attention to their lessons.**

- Finally, an added benefit of the spacious learning street arises when one considers the recent introduction of free school meals for all Key Stage children. Many schools have struggled to cope with this initiative as they lack the space to sit half of the school down at the same time without adversely affecting topics such as PE and drama (the school hall is typically used for dining as well as these topics). This problem will never arise with the Sunesis Keynes design, as there is plenty of space.

**Feedback from the school team and parents:**

- Parental involvement and participation has improved, and this is a significant development as evidence elsewhere shows that parental and family involvement in a child's education brings many positive benefits to the child. A recent session whereby parents came in to school to support the children in a maths lesson then developed into a session for parents where they were shown how modern maths is now taught. The headteacher commented, "This is absolutely brilliant!"

- The headteacher is full of praise for the new school, describing it as "lovely, and no comparison with what went before." This feeling was echoed by other staff that I encountered on my visit.
- A pupil commented "It's just like a hotel!"



**"This new structure is a very striking building, it's unusual for me to walk into a building and go 'Wow!'"**

Education Magazine



**"It's just like a hotel!."**

Pupil, Kempston Rural School

**Parental involvement and participation has improved, and this is a significant development as evidence elsewhere shows that parental and family involvement in a child's education brings many positive benefits to the child.**

- The space within the learning street has enabled the school to hold events such as the Christmas Fair, which took up the whole of the street but without disturbing the classrooms. Equally, the internal access controls enable events such as a MacMillan coffee morning to be held in school time, again without disturbing the pupils or lessons.



CASE STUDY

# Wootton Lower School

Mr Chris Taverner,  
Headteacher

REQUIREMENT

The previous mobile classrooms suffered all the usual problems associated with those types of buildings, both in terms of condition and suitability for teaching.

SOLUTION

The school has been provided with a double Connect classroom to replace an existing double mobile classroom that had been on site for a number of years.

HANDOVER

The new accommodation was handed over to the school in October 2014, and has been in full use since that date. Currently there are Year 4 classes in occupation.

Previous issues:

- The mobile classrooms were poorly situated in a slight hollow, which filled with water during wet weather. Mud and other rubbish naturally accumulated in the area, giving a poor impression to users and visitors to the school.
- They were damp and cold in winter, with erratic heating and air-conditioning. Conversely, they were too hot in summer as they lacked adequate insulation and ventilation, coupled with flat roofs.
- Access for people with disabilities was poor, as access ramps were needed to the main entrance. Internally, space was tight meaning that mobility issues became a real problem.
- IT was particularly difficult to manage as the school use laptops on a trolley. Moving these from the main school into the mobile classrooms resulted in damage due to the uneven surfaces whilst travelling up and down the access ramps.
- The toilets were particularly difficult to clean and keep pleasant smelling.
- The cramped lobby that served as access, cloakroom, toilet area and breakout space was far too small. It was generally contaminated with the smell from the toilets.
- The floor was “soft and bouncy” leading to a suspicion that it lacked sufficient bracing and this resulted in a form of motion sickness for some children.

The new accommodation has many benefits:

- It has a light, airy and spacious feeling, with great windows that stretch from floor to ceiling and a good ceiling height.
- Underfloor heating throughout aids ‘carpet time’ as the floor is no longer cold and damp, and frees up wall space with the absence of radiators. This enables teachers to vary their teaching styles, and have different furniture layouts.
- IT provision is much better with the latest projection equipment and boards on the teaching wall and ample power and data sockets throughout.

The new facilities treat all users with respect.

- The spacious entrance lobby easily accommodates the cloakroom, toilet access and two breakout spaces for one-to-one support. Previously, one-to-one sessions took place outside the toilets, in the headteacher’s office or staff room. The new facilities treat all users with respect, and remove any hint of stigmatisation for those needing extra support.
- Connect units come with very impressive internal finishes, especially the plastered walls as this delivers a professional and high quality environment.
- There is no need for access ramps, which eradicates problems for users with mobility problems or the transportation of IT and other resources.



- The external area is maximised by the thoughtful location of the block that has, in turn, released space for the creation of an outdoor seating and breakout space.

Overall, the school are delighted with their new accommodation and it has made a real difference to the teaching environment.

Feedback from the school team:

- Overall, the school are delighted with their new accommodation and it has made a real difference to the teaching environment.



**ON TRACK TO DELIVER MODERN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS FOR THE BOROUGH BY 2017**





**BEDFORD**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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