



View from central garden area
Images © Freeland Rees Roberts Architects.



Interior of new Hall

NEWS RELEASE

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Perse Girls Announces Completion of Major Improvement Scheme

The Perse School for Girls in Cambridge has completed major improvements to its accommodation in Union Road. The elegant and contemporary design, by award-winning Freeland Rees Roberts Architects, comprises a stunning new Hall, Refectory, Kitchen and Administrative Offices, all with state-of-the-art facilities. Construction commenced in July 2006 and the completion of the scheme was marked at a celebratory reception in January month that included an address by author and columnist, Allison Pearson.

Perse Girls has a well-established reputation as one of the country's top independent day schools and the aim of this scheme is to ensure that the school continues to offer facilities that match the highest standards of education. Freeland Rees Roberts Architects have been working as the school's architects since 1992 and have designed several new buildings for them over the years, including a new sports pavilion opened in 2006. In 2003 they were asked by the school to look at ways in which their main site on Union Road could provide more spacious dining and kitchen facilities, together with a larger, up to date

Assembly Hall. With space in this city centre location at a premium, this presented significant challenges.

Jeremy Lander, architect of the new facilities and director of Freeland Rees Roberts Architects, commented: “The key to the design was keeping the footprint and height as compact as possible to minimise the impact of the development on neighbouring properties. This was achieved by stepping the building on the west side and introducing a curved roof of brown aluminium. Also, because of the extremely restricted access, materials had to be selected that could be brought onto site in small loads. Reinforced concrete was the main structural material and the largest elements were the curved laminated beams for the Hall roof that were made up of two sections joined in the middle.

Jeremy Lander, architect and director of Freeland Rees Roberts said: “Cladding materials are mainly brown and buff brick, with copper trims and white aluminium windows. This makes a more cohesive style, especially around the central garden area where we had already built a classroom block. Another key consideration was accessibility and making movement around the school as efficient and pleasant as possible. This was especially true during construction and main contractor Haymills were extremely helpful with this, enabling the work to be phased in a way that would ensure the pupils’ safety and continuity of their education.”

Mr Lander continued: “By locating the new building in the space occupied by the old Hall, the existing dining and kitchen facilities could remain in place while construction progressed. The new dining facilities are much larger than before and innovative designs by interior fit-out specialists Worktown have made it an exciting, multi-functional and contemporary space – far removed from a traditional school dining room.”

Access to the Assembly Hall above is provided by two staircases leading up from the central area with views across the garden to the east. The remainder of the building contains meeting rooms and offices, one with a balcony overlooking the central garden area.

The Principal, Tricia Kelleher, commented: “The new building has transformed the heart of our school, reflecting our commitment to improvements which will help the school continue to thrive in the twenty first century.”

Miss Kelleher continued: “Making the most of our buildings and space is an important aspect of this evolution. A broad curriculum and an enviable range of extra-curricular activities mean that our requirements for space have expanded enormously. This was the catalyst for the Hall development. This new facility will be a perfect venue for a range of activities, including concerts and productions as well as clubs and societies. Perse Girls is delighted with the fantastic, modern designs of the new hall and dining facilities.”

Ends

Notes to the editor

1. For high resolution interior and exterior images of the new Perse Girls' facilities, please contact Carri Crook , Carisma Communications on 01842 815910; mobile 07704 920350 or email carri@carismacommunications.co.uk.
2. For full project information, interview or photo/film opportunity, please contact Carri Crook, Carisma Communications on 01842 815910; mobile 07704 920350 or email carri@carismacommunications.co.uk
3. For further information on the Perse Girls, please contact Tricia Kelleher, M.A.(Oxon), M.A.(Sussex) Principal, The Perse School for Girls, Union Road, Cambridge, CB2 1HF, Tel: 01223 454700; www.perse.cambs.sch.uk.
4. For further information on the design of the new Hall and Dining facilities or the new sports pavilion, please contact Jeremy Lander, Director, Freeland Rees Roberts Architects, 25 City Road, Cambridge CB1 1DP, Tel 01223 366555 or email jl@frrarchitects.co.uk; www.frrarchitects.co.uk.
5. Freeland Rees Roberts Architects were founded in Cambridge in 1981. Their design expertise incorporates all aspects of architecture - new buildings, alterations, extensions, conservation and interior and furniture design for commercial, government, domestic/private and institutional clients. Freeland Rees Roberts Architects' key areas of expertise include: Education: Colleges & Schools; Local Authority; Sports; Extensions; Ecclesiastical; Residential; Libraries; Commercial; Conservation and Domestic.
6. The Perse School for Girls has existed on its site between Union Road and Coronation Street since 1881. The size of the school body remains fairly constant with about 600 on the main site. There are also around 180 pupils at the Junior School in St Eligius Street, redeveloped six years ago to a design also by Freeland Rees Roberts Architects.
7. As a busy school in an urban location there are, inevitably, restraints on space but the school has always taken the view that responsible and sustainable development is achievable with careful planning. Many students come to the school by train and the proximity of the school to the railway station is therefore important. Other students who live in Cambridge are encouraged to walk or cycle and the central location helps with traffic congestion. Also the availability of educational facilities in central Cambridge, such as the Fitzwilliam Museum, is an invaluable resource for the school.
8. Access has significantly been improved and a new lift enables disabled students to access the Assembly Hall, most of the School's administrative offices and the 1st floor of the Classroom block (designed by Freeland Rees Roberts Architects and built in 1998). An existing ramp connects the floor of the new scheme with the northern part of the site.
9. A full list of contractors and consultants involved in the scheme is available from Carisma Communications.