



The Chase
A SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

Vision - A warm heart for a great school

Introduction

The Chase School in Malvern is a large and vibrant secondary school situated under the impressive backdrop of the Malvern Hills. The happiness and wellbeing of its students is the school's greatest priority and when the opportunity to redevelop a courtyard at the heart of the school presented itself, the school seized the opportunity for a new and innovative approach to redesigning the space.

'I am very proud to have designed something that could be built at school ... we don't often get opportunities like this.'

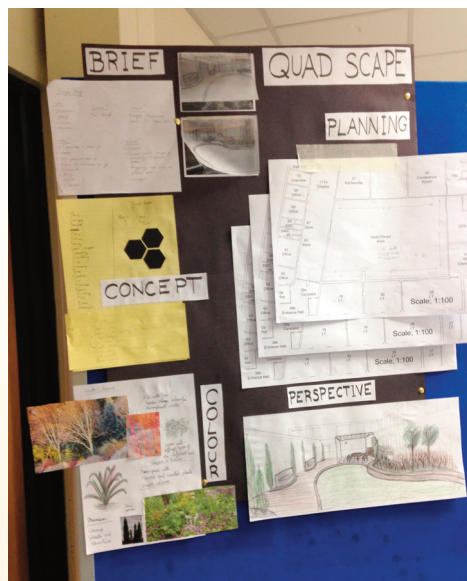
Student engagement

In partnership with a landscape architect the school threw down the design gauntlet directly to those that will benefit from the space the most ... the students themselves!

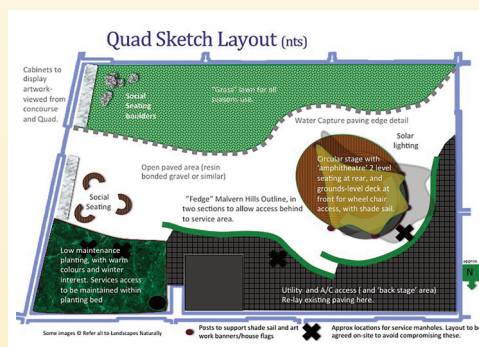
Students from years 7 to 13 at The Chase volunteered for an after school club under the lead of Glesni Speake, Head of Design and Technology, and the landscape experts. The club has been meeting weekly since January on the design brief for renovating the space into a 'warm heart for the school'.

Learning through landscape architecture

The students organised themselves into five project teams and gave themselves a company name. They worked through the landscape design process with the support of Felicity Robinson, a landscape architect who specialises in supporting school grounds design projects. Her specific expertise involves engaging students of all ages in the full design process from inception to completion, 'I didn't realise this was a job!' said one of the students at the end of the project.



Starting with site assessment, needs analysis, surveying and measuring they applied maths, science and practical skills to work out constraints and opportunities. They developed an understanding of



'I feel excited and nervous at the same time that our ideas may be used 'for real'.'

the site and annotated a scale plan with the key details. Model making workshops followed, where ideas were developed in 3D, along with perspective drawings to test out further ideas. Materials and planting were thought about too, with hands-on workshops looking at possible surfacing, textures, colours and seasonal changes.

Skills for life

The teams presented their ideas to senior leaders and a visiting contractor Paul Clark from HFN. This was described as 'scary' by the students, but they rose magnificently to the occasion! Headteacher, Richard Jacobs commended the students for their hard work and imaginative designs. 'Appreciating and utilising concepts from our students' point of view is key to us creating an inspiring and nurturing outdoor learning environment at the very heart of our school.'

Rills, talent display, performance and sparkly lights

The ideas developed by the students are imaginative and practical so key points from all five teams have informed and enriched the final scheme for the Quad, designed by Felicity. A representation of the Malvern Hills forms a shaped 'fledge' to screen air conditioning units and other services. Water is incorporated through the inclusion of rain 'rills' in paving that add an ephemeral artistic touch. The Quad will also provide nurturing space for private conversations in a calm environment. Student talent, artworks display and performance in an amphitheatre/stage are part of the vision for a space that will also be used for 'breakout' sessions and community events.

'Please, help us to bring this project to life!'

Fundraising

The school has so far managed to raise half of the £30,000 required and between May and July 2016 will be actively seeking sponsorship from businesses and donations from parents and members of the community to help turn their dreams into a reality.

Donations can be made online, so if you or your business can help in any way, please visit the school's website www.chase.sch.uk where you will find a link to the project, or contact Vicky Watson, Business Manager at the school (01684 891961 office@chase.worcs.sch.uk)

All donations are most gratefully received and as an extra thank you for donations over £20, your name will be displayed on a leaf or heart on our 'tree of thanks'. Business and individual key sponsors will be displayed on our sponsors plaque, advertised as much as possible through school media, dependent on value pledged, and will be invited to our opening celebration event.





The Quad – now it really is a warm heart to the school!

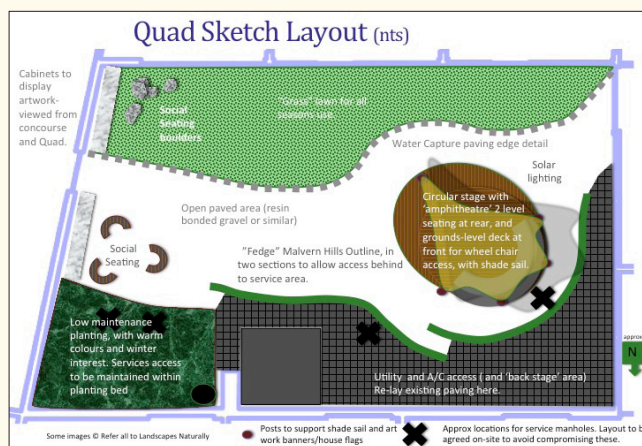
An earlier article described the student engagement in the design for redevelopment of the Quad at The Chase school in Malvern.

This project was describe by the then business manager as ‘a new and innovative approach to redesigning the space’.

Felicity Robinson, of Landscapes Naturally, worked alongside the students to give them a real flavour of work as a landscape architect by helping them through the process of analysing the space, proposing changes, design development, presentation of ideas to senior leadership, budgeting and the inevitable ‘value engineering’.

which was, of course, as controversial as it always is in real life!

Finally, at the beginning of the autumn, the choice of plants was agreed by the students, and



Planting the finishing touches

planted by them too. One of the Year 9 girls involved said “I had a great time gardening and I hope to keep the area looking as great, as it does now, in the future”.

This has been a long-term real-time project working with students over two years. One student, Dimitri Pribojac in Year 9, who attended the project workshops consistently over this time has commented “I have really enjoyed my time working on The Quad as it has helped me to develop my interest in landscape architecture and to have a positive impact on the school”.

The Design and Technology teacher leading the project has said “It has been a real pleasure working with Felicity and the pupils on this project.

The pupils have been fantastic, hardworking and innovative throughout and we have felt fully supported by Landscapes Naturally at all times.

Having a real client for a design and make project has been beneficial to the pupils, and seeing their designs made into reality has inspired many of them to pursue design as a career.

We, as a school, now look forward to using the space for many, many years”.

Ref: www.landscapesnaturally.co.uk



The project team at work