

Case Study: The Dearne ALC



THE BRIEF

As part of the Barnsley BSF (Building Schools for the Future), Dearne High School was scheduled to be re-built to create the Dearne Advanced Learning Centre. The whole project involved a total of 13 schools being transformed into 9 ALCs and 2 special schools. Dearne was one of the first to benefit from the largest single investment in education in Barnsley, funded through Partnerships for Schools, Barnsley Council and schools contributions and delivered through Laing O'Rourke.

With a focus on building a school with flexible learning spaces, break out areas and open space together with individual learning areas, the modern new building has been designed to incorporate facilities which are modern, innovative and flexible.



THE END RESULT

With full height windows and open plan areas the whole building has a light and spacious feel, which is surrounded by large outdoor spaces and sporting facilities.

The largest indoor learning spaces are the sports hall and the main hall, the latter of which is divided by floor to ceiling moveable walls to divide the hall into three, offering a drama studio area and two individual hall areas. When the doors are fully opened, the hall is a vast space with full audience seating at one end providing seating for 242 people, and a Q-build stage at the other.

The design has been carefully and cleverly created to make full use of the hall space, offering complete performance facilities or individual spaces for learning, dining or examinations, capable of changing to the

needs of the school. ESA McIntosh fitted the school with classroom furniture and turned to Stage Systems for the performance stage and seating.

The seating is a retractable design, and Stage Systems worked in conjunction with the school build, providing advice and illustrated the design through detailed drawings, offering a variety of finish options, then delivered and installed the whole seating unit. Fully upholstered, with arm rests and fold-down seats, the auto-Q retractable seating automatically folds away as a complete unit, including seats, steps and handrails, storing compactly against the hall wall, a perfect example of the philosophy of the new school's facilities, of space, function and flexibility.

Dearne ALC has been designed to offer the best possible facilities to its 1,300 students, but also to encourage community use, so parents, clubs and the wider neighbourhood can make use of these amazing amenities outside school hours. The performance hall is just one of the spaces which will attract external use, bringing the students, the local community and mutual interests together.

The ALC will continue to have a partnership with John Laing, as the new building will be maintained through their Integrated Services Contract over the next 25 years, to ensure that the building continues to offer the best learning environment possible.

WHAT THEY SAID:

The ALC opened in January 2011 and is already proving to be an inspirational space for teachers and students alike. The versatile learning spaces are ensuring that spaces such as the main hall are fully utilised and used in a variety of formats for different learning experiences. The whole development has ensured that the students fully enjoy their school experience, and that teachers and school as a whole have the facilities that they need to offer them the very best education possible.

