Reimagining Classrooms:

A guide to designing classrooms for the future.

SPACES

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Thinking Caps On

Just as modern workplace design has revolutionised the office, there has been a quieter transformation occurring in classrooms across the globe. Every student deserves a quality space to learn from, and it looks as though the days of rowed desks and sterile classrooms are coming to an end.

Research has shown us that students respond overwhelmingly positively to innovative design that is intentional and curated to meet the varying needs of different types of learning. A report published in Building and the Environment revealed that the architecture and design of a school or educational institution can have an incredible impact on its students, both positive and negative. Modern teaching environments require flexibility, empathy and individuality, and there cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach to educational design.

Each school should be able to celebrate its students and empower them to educate the next generation to enter adulthood with confidence.

This guide explores the transformative power that purposeful design can have on educational environments and uncovers what the future holds for this vital corner of the industry.

Design classrooms for *life*; where choices are made, futures are forged.

For the next generation entering the workplace, it can be an intimidating world, swamped with choice and expectations of maturity. Educational environments, especially when students reach college, need to get ahead of the game and get their learners 'life-ready.' By allowing students to make their own choices, own their learning styles and have autonomy over how they do it, we can expect to see young adults ready to work or are more prepared for higher education.

Human Centered Thinking and Design Thinking

Schools can borrow from Human Centered Design principles and design thinking, which are often found within a workspace. This is where design understands its people and creates space that speaks to their needs.

The combination of design thinking and the Human Centred Design process can look something like this:

Inspiration	The discovery of the problem motivates a search for a solution.
Ideation	Designers may synthesise situations to then develop and test ideas.
Implementation	Prototypes are initially introduced, and then learnings are taken and applied from the test.

How Spatial Agility Fosters Self-Directed Learning.

Similarly to workspaces, schools should provide students with options by creating dedicated zones for different needs.

Create Diverse Learning Zones	Develop multiple, distinct areas in schools tailored to varied learning needs. This should range from silent, focused spaces to dynamic collaboration hubs, and even specialized booths for project teams.
Thoughtful Design Elements	Beyond just space, focus on the aesthetics and functional design: incorporate appropriate colours, textures, and sound designs. Ensure good ventilation to optimize the learning environment.
Guide Proper Utilization	It's not enough to simply have these zones; students must be taught how to use them effectively. Implement training or orientation sessions that teach students the intended use and benefits of each zone.
Empower Teachers as Coaches	Transition the role of teachers from mere instructors to mentors or coaches. Their role becomes pivotal in guiding students on how to maximize these dedicated spaces, ensuring that the principles of each zone are maintained.
Encourage Self-Directed Learning	Encourage students to take charge of their education. By treating them as mature individuals, we can instill essential life skills such as time management, social interaction, and self-motivation, paving the way for a more holistic education.

Curious
minds need
space
to *grow*

Design-Proof: How to Create Educational Spaces that Stay at the Cutting-Edge

Embrace Immersive Learning

Recognize and prepare for the integration of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies. These advancements aren't just future prospects—they're imminent changes set to revolutionise classrooms.

Equip Classrooms with Modern Tools

Stay updated with the latest educational technologies. From core tools like interactive whiteboards to high-quality Wi-Fi, ensuring the right infrastructure is in place is paramount. Regularly review and update these tools to meet current standards.

Adopt Agile Design Principles

Reimagine school spaces with agility in mind. Integrate moveable acoustic partition walls, modular furniture, and diverse learning environments that can adapt to changing educational needs.

Anticipate Evolving EdTech Needs

It's not enough to just keep up; educational environments must be forward-thinking. As technology in education evolves rapidly, create an action plan that keeps learning spaces at the cutting-edge of innovation.

Foster a Pupil-Centric Approach

Transition into an era that places students at the heart of education. By focusing on their ever-evolving requirements, ensure that each innovation or change made in the learning environment caters directly to their needs.

No matter
your age,
human connection
with nature is a
crucial part
of our being.

Biophilic design can help reduce stress, increase calmness and improve mental ill health symptoms. In an increasingly urbanised landscape, it's becoming more challenging for learning environments to bring the outside in.

Countless studies have found that harnessing biophilia in educational settings profoundly impacts children and teachers alike.

You've probably seen the term 'biophilic design' thrown around as an industry buzzword, but make sure to believe in its potential. Simply put, biophilic design harnesses the power of nature and blends it with human-made spaces, generating transformative results.

Nature in the Space	This is where natural elements are brought into your learning environment.
Natural Analogues	Manmade items that emulate nature.
Natural Space Simulation	Where the configuration of a space parallels shapes found in nature.

To truly maximise the potential, biophilic design must be holistic, combining all senses and elements to rejuvenate and transform your school and your people.

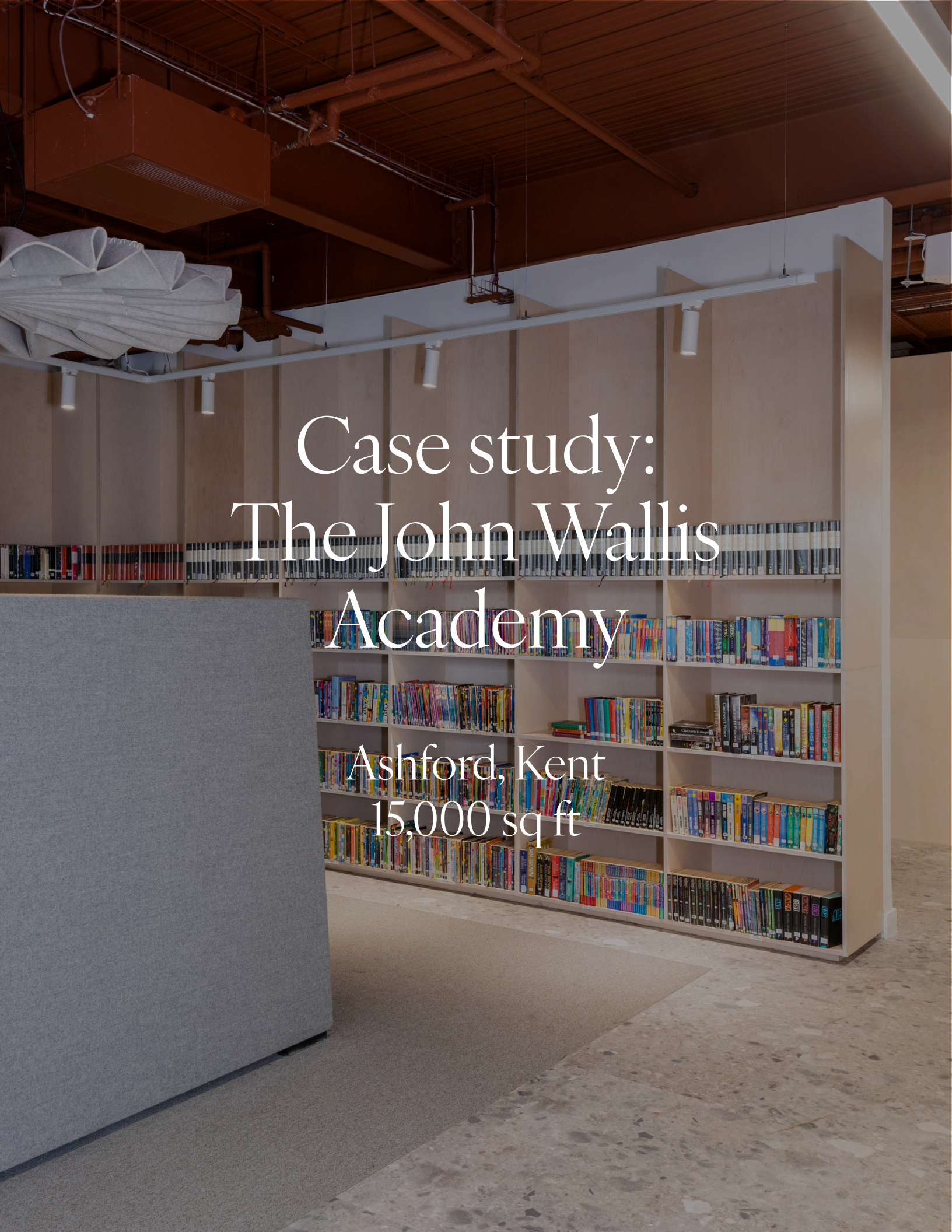|	
Abundant Natural Light	Natural light is a cornerstone of biophilic design, as it impacts our circadian rhythms and bolsters our Vitamin D, improving focus and boosting happiness. Maximise using windows, skylights, and glass partitions to flood classrooms, corridors, and common areas with daylight.
Indoor Greenery	Various plant species with different shapes, sizes, and textures will create a stimulating environment and a direct connection to nature for your students. Plants purify the air, increase oxygen levels, evoke a sense of tranquillity, reduce stress, and improve cognitive performance.
Living Walls and Vertical Gardens	Transform plain walls into lush canvases bursting with life. Not only do living installations provide a treat for the senses, but they also enhance air quality, dampen noise, and provide insulation.
Biophilic Art and Graphics	If bringing living plant life into your classroom is challenging, instal art that mimics nature. Studies show that biophilic patterns can benefit children's wellbeing.

Case study: The John Wallis Academy

Ashford, Kent
15,000 sq ft

The John Wallis Academy came to us to help transform their 6th form space, classrooms and dance studio. Their vision is to cater to every student, and these spaces needed to be designed as a stepping stone to help their learners transition seamlessly into the next phase of their life.

The result is multifunctional spaces, meaning they can adapt and mould to each specific student's needs when needed. From open lecture areas to meeting rooms to focus areas, collaborative spaces to reading nooks and alcoves for independent study, the design helps students take ownership of their learning.

We installed movable glass walls in one space, meaning the room can be divided into two. One is a space for 6th form students, and the other is a Learning Resource Centre for younger students.

Glass was used so that there was a sense of communication between the two spaces; the younger students could see what the older students were doing, acting as a source of inspiration and stimulus.
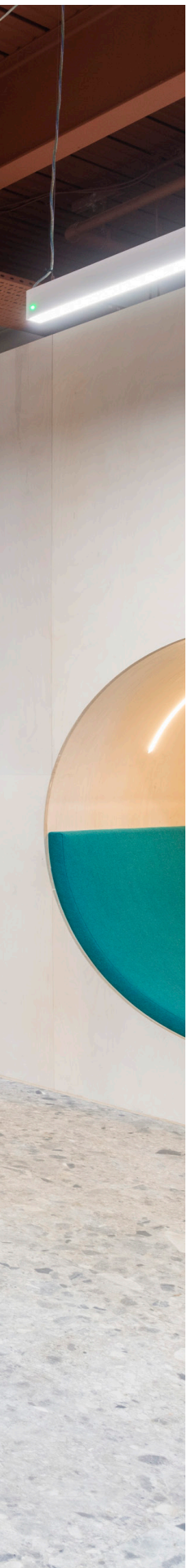
By creating adaptable spaces, the through line we curated across the academy is one of self-direction, openness and motivation.

Inspire with
every hue:
the power of *colour*
shapes our
learning journey.

Colour therapy, or colour medicine as it's sometimes referred to, explores the psychological benefits of different colours, their hues, brightness and saturations. In educational environments, the impact of using the appropriate colour can have drastic results on students' performance. They not only enhance the ability to learn but also impact how a pupil may experience a space.

Balance Energizing and Calming Spaces	Design classrooms with a mix of bright colours for motivation and pastel tones for relaxation. Ensure spaces cater to varying students' moods and needs throughout the day.
Optimize Attention and Memory	Implement colour schemes, especially those from nature, that are proven to boost attention and enhance memory performance. Consider incorporating greens, as they are known to facilitate long-term concentration.
Exercise Caution with Bolder Tones	While vibrant shades stimulate creativity, use them judiciously to prevent overstimulation. Incorporate them in specific zones meant for brainstorming and artistic endeavors.
Encourage Intimate Learning with Warm Tones	For discussion groups or personal reading zones, use warm colours to make spaces feel cosier, fostering a more intimate and connected learning experience.
Expand Horizons with Cool Colours	Redesign smaller classrooms with cool colours like blues and light purples, which can give the illusion of more space and promote a more expansive mindset.

the evolution of educational spaces is inevitable. With the intersection of technology, human-centric design, and our deep understanding of how learners engage, the traditional classroom is being redefined.

Our children deserve environments that foster growth, innovation, and adaptability, ensuring they are equipped for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow. The harmony of design, technology, and pedagogy is the blueprint for the future of education.

If you're ready to embark on a journey that transforms the educational spaces in your institution, ensuring they are both impactful and future-ready, we invite you to get in touch with us. Let's collaborate and lay the foundation for master planning your next school project.

Get in touch with us

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