

Kensington Prep School 'Creating Spaces for Growing Minds'



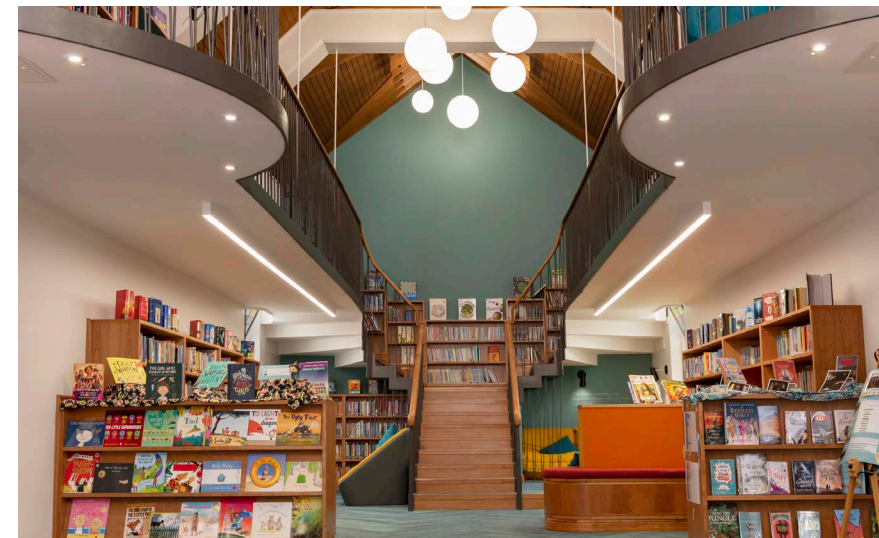
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Educating the next generation to prepare them for adult life is a huge responsibility and it has never felt more important or more difficult to do well. We have started to alter many of our teaching practices and increase the emphasis and focus on the pupil's learning. We felt that our traditional classrooms were limiting our ability to give the girls a really powerful experience of greater self-directed learning. To provide spaces which will work with our teaching goals, we have recently completed a £2.7 million building programme, which has provided new physical spaces – spacious classroom breakout areas with retractable doors, a high-tech explore floor, a recording studio and an eco green house. These spaces provide room for exploration and group collaborative work to complement our classrooms and specialist rooms. There are also quiet spaces for reflection and creating. Our building programme means that Kensington Prep has come of the best facilities of any prep school in the Country.

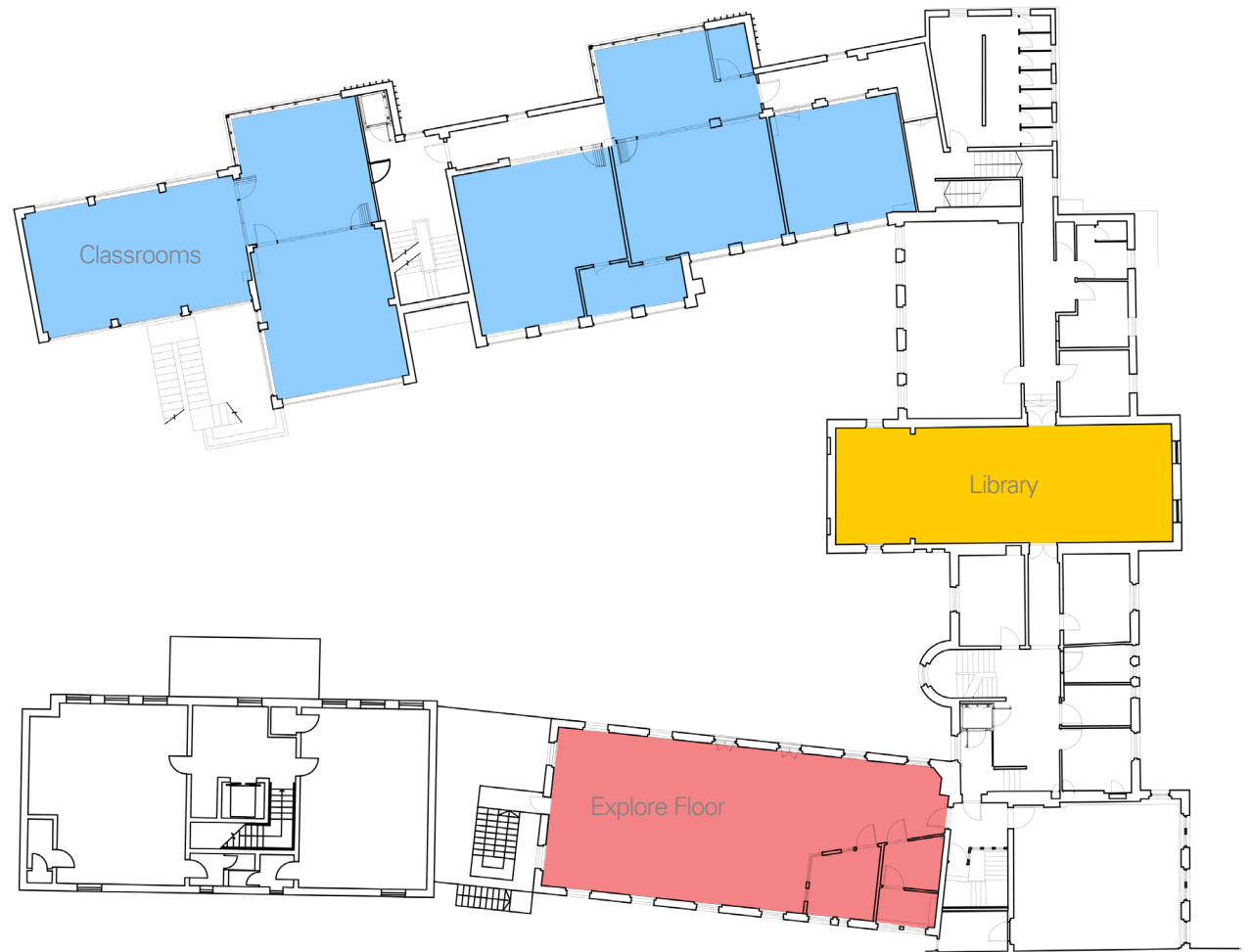
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Prudence Lynch
Former Head of Kensington Prep School



Creating Spaces for Growing Minds; Phased Redevelopment

In 2012 Kensington Prep school set out to equip their girls for a changing world. Following a three-year exploration of teaching methods, they commissioned ArchitecturePLB to design the physical environment to facilitate these changes. An ambitious programme of refurbishment was designed to 'create more opportunities for girls to experience self-directed learning, independent exploration and collaborative work.' The result is a phased re-development which has transformed the school's teaching and learning facilities.



First Floor Plan

Explore Floor

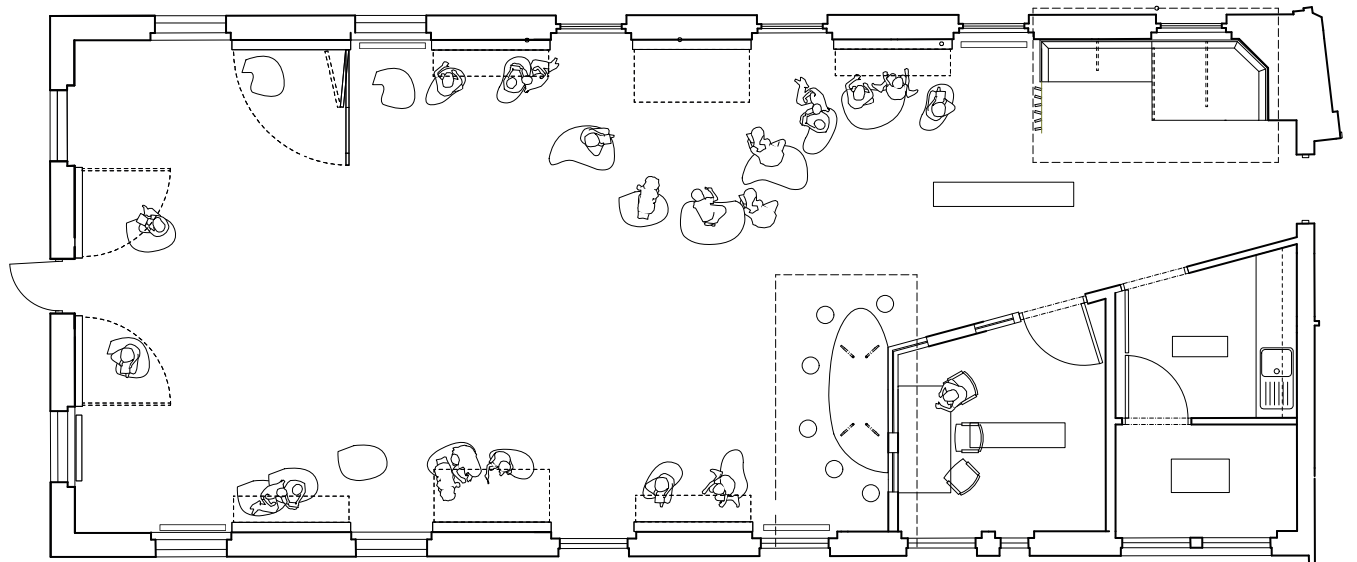
Designed to support and encourage independent exploration, self-directed learning and collaboration.



Explore Floor

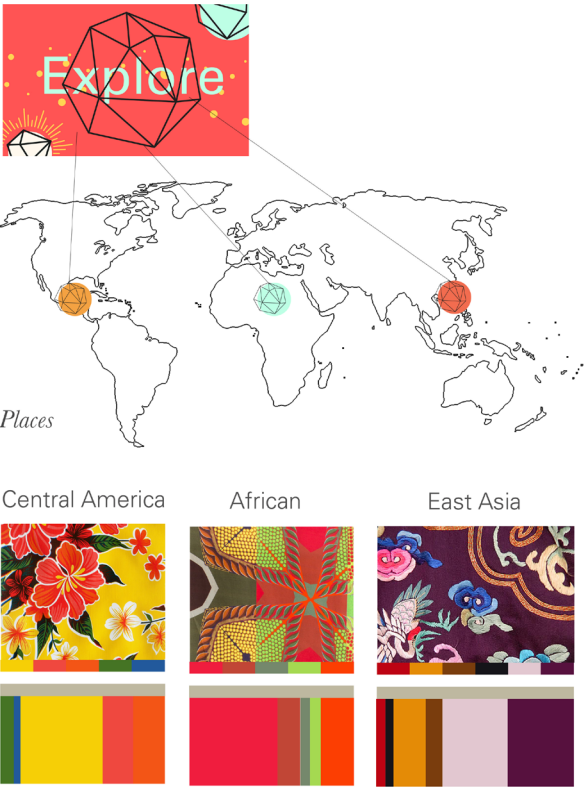
In February 2016, ArchitecturePLB completed the 'Explore Floor' a large, flexible space designed to encourage independent learning.

The space is kitted out with the latest technology, containing interactive learning stations at different heights as well as a fully equipped sound lab for the girls to explore video and sound media.



Explore Floor

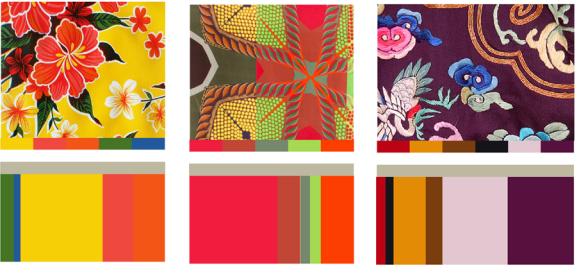
The space is brightly coloured with colour themes inspired by Central America, East Asia and Africa. Bespoke floor pillows and moveable foam block furniture can be configured to suit any group size and activity and fold out scribble walls are designed to promote collaborative working.



Central America

African

East Asia



People

Amy Johnson was President of the Society between 1935-1937 and is the UK's most famous female aviator, after having been the first woman to fly solo from England to Australia in 1930 in her Gypsy Moth, at the age of 26. Her flying career began in 1928 and other triumphs included becoming the first female ground engineer licensed by the Air Ministry, and being awarded the CBE for her flying achievements.

Ada Lovelace, born in 1815, is often referred to as the first 'computer' programmer and is celebrated today through the Ada Lovelace Day. Ada Lovelace Day is about sharing stories of women – whether engineers, scientists, technologists or mathematicians – who have inspired you to become who you are today.

Caroline Haslett was an electrical engineer, first secretary and later president of the Women's Engineering Society in 1940. She campaigned at the time for electricity to be used more widely in the household, thus releasing women from manual household chores and freeing up their time to allow them to contribute to the workforce. She was an adviser to Government on employment for women.

Ada Lovelace
1815-1852
English mathematician and writer
The first computer programmer



Explore Floor

// The new spaces are incredibly freeing for teachers and pupils – they provide imaginative spaces for more self-directed, independent and collaborative ways to learn, to grown in intellectual depth bravery and stamina. The Year 6 girls, in particular, utterly loved the changes to their physical environment when we opened up the new spaces last term. They had the full run of our new Explore Floor and multi-media recording studio for their end of year entrepreneurial challenge...

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Prudence Lynch
Former Head
Kensington Prep School





// instead of spending your whole day in the classroom on in the ICT room it's a new place to get excited about learning //

// it gives us a sense of independence //
The girls of Kensington Prep School

// You look at the way you plan lessons completely differently, and it really opens your mind as to how you as a teacher can explore different directions to take the children in. //
A member of the teaching staff

Exemplar Classrooms

Working with the school, ArchitecturePLB carried out a combination of teaching and work environment research to find a creative solution to complement the school's drive to do the best for their students. The design breakthrough occurred when the need for one desk per pupil was reduced by combining the need across two classes. Tests requiring desks are held one class at a time and are not onerous to schedule. The classrooms are average UK size and even with the opening up to a shared breakout area, do not allow for much flexibility in furniture or settings.

Flexible classrooms for Year 4



Agile Classroom

A learning space that can be reconfigured 'on a dime' will engage different kinds of learners and teachers

Research into the teaching environment came, in the main part, from the publication 'The Third Teacher' 79 Ways you can use Design to Transform Teaching and Learning. The most appropriate and exceptional ideas were cherry picked and developed, to create a space designed to improve the health and well-being of its users;

Biophilia and its effect on health and wellbeing is rarely considered within traditional classroom design. This simple theory researched by Bill Browning and captured in the publications 'The Economics of Biophilia' and '14 Patterns of Biophilic Design' prove that connections to nature improve our lives. The classrooms benefit from large windows and good daylight but being in central London offers no significant view of nature. As a consequence, a corner of the classrooms have been designed in a 'Forest Refresh' theme, complete with real plants.



Make Peace with Fidgeting

Movement aides learning and brain development.



Bring the Outside in

Bringing the qualities of nature back into building spaces provides attention restoration and allows the brain to shift into another mode- Eureka!

Living elements are processed in another part of the brain to non-living and are more pleasing generally. The natural world reduces stress levels and adds texture and interest to a design.



Build a Nest

Children need comfort just as much at school as they do at home. Therefore give them a soft, quiet and cozy area to play in by themselves or with a few friends.

Library Re-development

"I do believe something very
magical can happen when you read
a good book."

JK Rowling

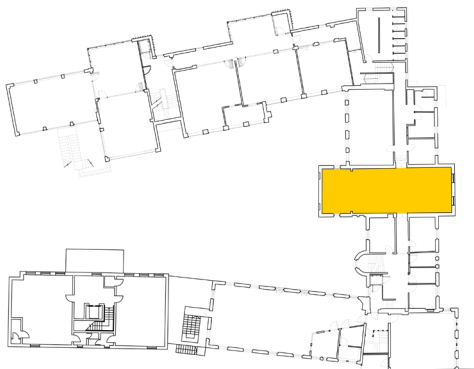


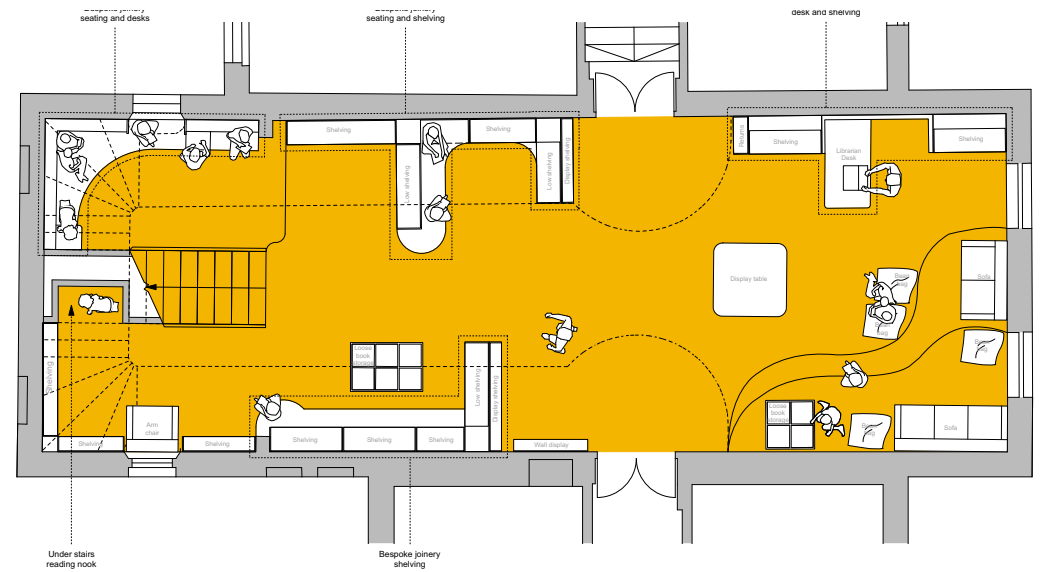
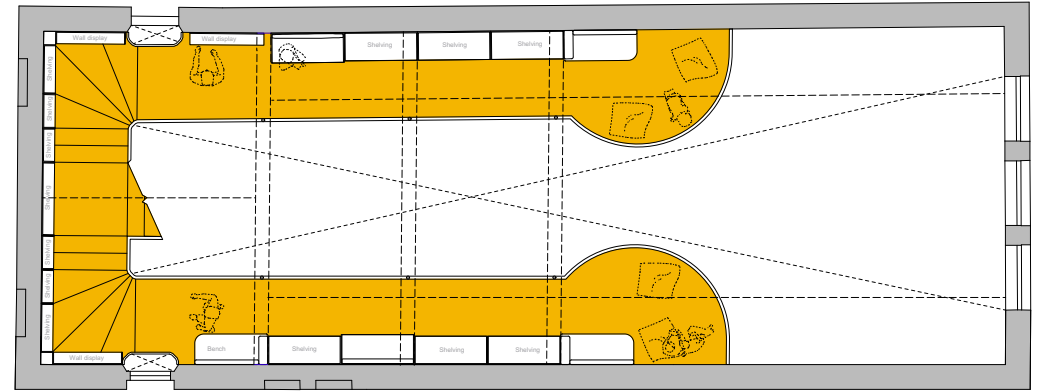
Library

The new library at the heart of the school is the counterpart to the 'Explore Floor'. The project has prompted interesting discussions about the purpose of a library in the digital age. Often these spaces are used as an extension of IT space, however the school wanted to create a mature, calming, IT free environment to engage with books.

ArchitecturePLB's design transforms the existing double height space to create a striking high-quality library space reminiscent of a traditional galleried reading room suitable for 21st century learning. A feature stair leads up to a new mezzanine level which creates more space for book storage as well as cosy reading spaces.

Finishes have been chosen to create a traditional library feel and reflect the existing timber plank ceiling.







Kensington Prep School's Innovation Team has closely monitored and evaluated the impact of the new spaces on the pupils' learning. These included qualitative and quantitative evaluations from Year 2, 4 and 6 regarding working in new ways in their learning spaces, also listening carefully to pupil, parent and teacher perspectives. There has been a significant impact on the girls' learning experience and achievements allowing much more independence, collaborative learning and problem solving in small groups. The pupils' say they feel they have more creative freedom too and parents are delighted with the school's forward-thinking approach.

// From the outset we were inspired by PLB; they brought new ideas and revitalised our projects. We were particularly impressed by the amount of additional research that was put into taking our ideas forward. Architecture PLB advanced our own thinking while generating creative solutions to the challenges we presented to them. We now have a spectacular open plan space that is being put forward for national awards and contemporary classrooms that are at the cutting edge of modern teaching; Architecture PLB has been an integral part of this exciting journey.

Gareth Atkinson
Director of Finance and Operations
Kensington Prep School



Team

Client: Girls Day School Trust (GDST)

School: Kensington Prep School

Architect: ArchitecturePLB

Contractor: Procure Building Services (Watford) (Library)

Contractor: JD Partnership Ltd (explore floor)

Structural Engineer: Waterman Structures (London)

M&E: Johns Slater Haward (Ipswich)

QS: Ridge

Joinery: ECJ Joinery

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