



CONNECT classrooms which transform schools needing to accommodate growing numbers of pupils have been celebrated at a showcase day.

ELSTOW School in Bedford showcased its new state-of-the-art Connect classrooms and hall to colleagues, dignitaries and the mayor of Bedford Borough at an open day.

In 2012, Bedford Borough Council received funding to build a new secondary school which meant that some schools, such as Elstow School, needed to accommodate more pupils as they converted to primary school status.

Both the council and the school wanted to provide permanent, modern, energy efficient learning spaces for their increased pupil intake.

Bedford Borough Council decided to use Connect, a design initiative delivering traditionally constructed classrooms at a fixed price with guaranteed quality and timescales.

The school now has four additional classrooms and a new hall to provide an extra 120 places for its new year 5 and 6 classes and pupils remaining at the school.

Jenny Winder, head teacher at Elstow School was very pleased with the completed buildings.

She said: "The new Connect classrooms and hall provide a tremendous learning environment with lots of natural light and space and a modern contemporary feel which suits the children of today who are the leaders of the future. We are very proud of our new build and would recommend it to anyone needing to expand or build a new school."

Connect is a design system developed by a unique partnership of private and public sector knowledge. Specialists from Derbyshire County Council, Faithful & Gould and local authority controlled Scape have worked together to provide standardised quality permanent educational buildings.

Connect is delivered through Scape, a company at the forefront of driving down UK public sector building procurement costs with a proven track record of delivering standardised construction solutions to the public sector.

Chief Executive of Scape Mark Robinson commented on the event: "Scape was proud to attend the Showcase day at Elstow School and to see how our work with Connect has made such a massive improvement to the learning environments in Bedford.

"Schools like Elstow work incredibly hard to provide a great educational experience for their pupils and now with Connect classrooms, they have the right space to teach in and see the children gain fantastic results.

"As a local authority controlled company, Scape is ideally placed to see how councils are having to manage with ever decreasing funds and help to support education authorities, including the emerging academy and free school providers, to deliver modern learning spaces within tight budgets. Initiatives like Connect show councils just how much they can provide and demonstrate that high quality learning environments can be realised with limited resources."

The school opened its doors to attendees, who heard speeches from key speakers including the Mayor of Bedford, on the 10th January.

Mayor Dave Hodgson said: "Bedford Borough Council's commitment to education is evident in our substantial investment in the maintenance of our schools.

"The remarkable progress achieved by Bedford Borough's schools in recent years has been confirmed in emphatic fashion in Ofsted's Annual Report which recently ranked the borough as the second best place in the country for lower and primary schools.

"Since the data was compiled for the report, the figure has increased even further to 98.2%, which would place Bedford Borough as the top local authority area in the country."

Dave added: "Pupils must be able to work in an environment which supports high standards of teaching and learning. That's why we are investing so heavily in the improvement and maintenance of schools over the next 4 years."

As the contractors who carried out the project at the school, key figures from Willmott Dixon also spoke on the day.

Managing director at Willmott Dixon Chris Tredget said: "Willmott Dixon have been working in partnership with Bedford Borough for four years, delivering high quality educational projects. The work at Elstow School is a fine example of how collaboration via Scape with the borough has enabled us to deliver exceptional value through our standardised design solutions. We are proud of what we have delivered and delighted to see the positive effects on educational outcomes."