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## Inspiring buildings

Catering for new methods of teaching and learning

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# Designing spaces for movement



Enhancing or maximising the experience of movement within, to and from a space is critical to its overall success particularly in an interactive, education environment. **ANDREW WOOD** of Curtis Wood Architects discusses two contrasting spaces for movement.

## Southgate School

**O**VER the past few years Curtis Wood has helped Southgate School in North London – a large state school catering for over 1,600 students – evolve new ways of dealing with the changing needs of the modern secondary school.

The school was awarded science specialist status in 2004 and needed to create a new science laboratory as part of that award. Feasibility studies were undertaken to establish a location, focusing on under-used spaces and looking at ways to create new spaces.

### Sun pipes

"The new science laboratory was designed to float in the void of an atrium at first floor, with a light slot running around the intervention. The light slot is heavily lit and accommodates polished aluminium sun pipes that allow daylight and sunlight to pass through this void to the underside of the lab below. The lab needed to be an outstanding teaching environment but at the same time we were also asked to create a fun and interesting learning vehicle in its own

right. As one moves around, underneath and through the spaces created by our intervention, the building tries to reveal how it works, to inspire the students in science and technology.

"We were keen for the ground floor areas to be connected in some way to the outside and not feel oppressive, even though the new science laboratory effectively filled the first floor of this atrium environment. The common areas reflect the external light as clouds pass over the school and still retain a sense of the atrium that once was. However, the voids and laboratory underside have supplementary lighting to allow the lab to glow and separate itself from the surrounding spaces within the school. It has a feeling of 'ship' about it, and this was very much at the forefront of our minds in the design process.

"We were keen for the materials chosen and the spatial experience achieved as one moves around, through and underneath the laboratory to be one of 'the unusual' and in a very direct way this is what was achieved."



## Karen Hardy Dance

**K**AREN HARDY launched her own dance studio in London in response to the rise in popularity of ballroom dancing. The design brief required three distinct dance-teaching spaces, which could be flexibly joined to become one large dance studio, together with a reception space and café/bar in addition to the normal back of house facilities: WCs, storage spaces and staff facilities.

"The interior provides a creative environment for dance and the design encapsulates the essence of two interlocked elements playing off each other. This manifested itself particularly in the original ceiling design, where large ribbons of colour and material wrapped and folded in a sequence of movements to tie the bar area and the three dance spaces together. The essence of a dancing couple is carried throughout the design, where functional elements like the bar and reception are created by interlocking folded elements from walls, floors and ceilings.

"The design response had to be ruthlessly functional, however we were keen to also bring something to the relationship between dancer, music and the environment. Architecture is static, so our response was to in some way to freeze the essence of dance in the fabric of the space – this is where the ribbons of ceiling idea came from.

"This notion sought to freeze the movement of a dancing couple in the ceiling aspect of the space, which in reality was the only built element that could allow any character to be expressed. We considered how a dance could be captured in freeze frame and tracked this movement through built

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form, as two large ribbons of ceiling flowed through each dance studio and the bar. When the spaces are used on a cellular basis, the ceiling design was to be seen as set pieces, but when the sliding doors are fully opened to create a large open space, the whole dance could be read through the ceiling aspect.

[www.curtiswoodarchitects.com](http://www.curtiswoodarchitects.com)

### Dont' forget the student perspective

- Create stimulating learning spaces indoors and outdoors
- Address issues of space, light and colour
- Design out bullying
- Give students a sense of ownership of their schools

SOURCE: CABE, *Creating Excellent Secondary Schools*