

New St Crispin's School opening to pupils on Wednesday

The newly completed St Crispin's School will open to pupils on Wednesday just after the half term holiday.

The brand new building in Burdiehouse will offer pupils and staff a completely fresh beginning in a specially designed environment. Headteacher Rhoda MacDougall told The Edinburgh Reporter everyone is looking forward to the adventure, now that most of the boxes have been unpacked.

The new £12 million school has been designed by The City of Edinburgh Council completely in house from the overall architectural design by the council's in house architect to the interior design under the watchful and creative eye of Lesley McMillan. Soft, gentle colours are used throughout – a far cry from the primary colours used in schools in years gone

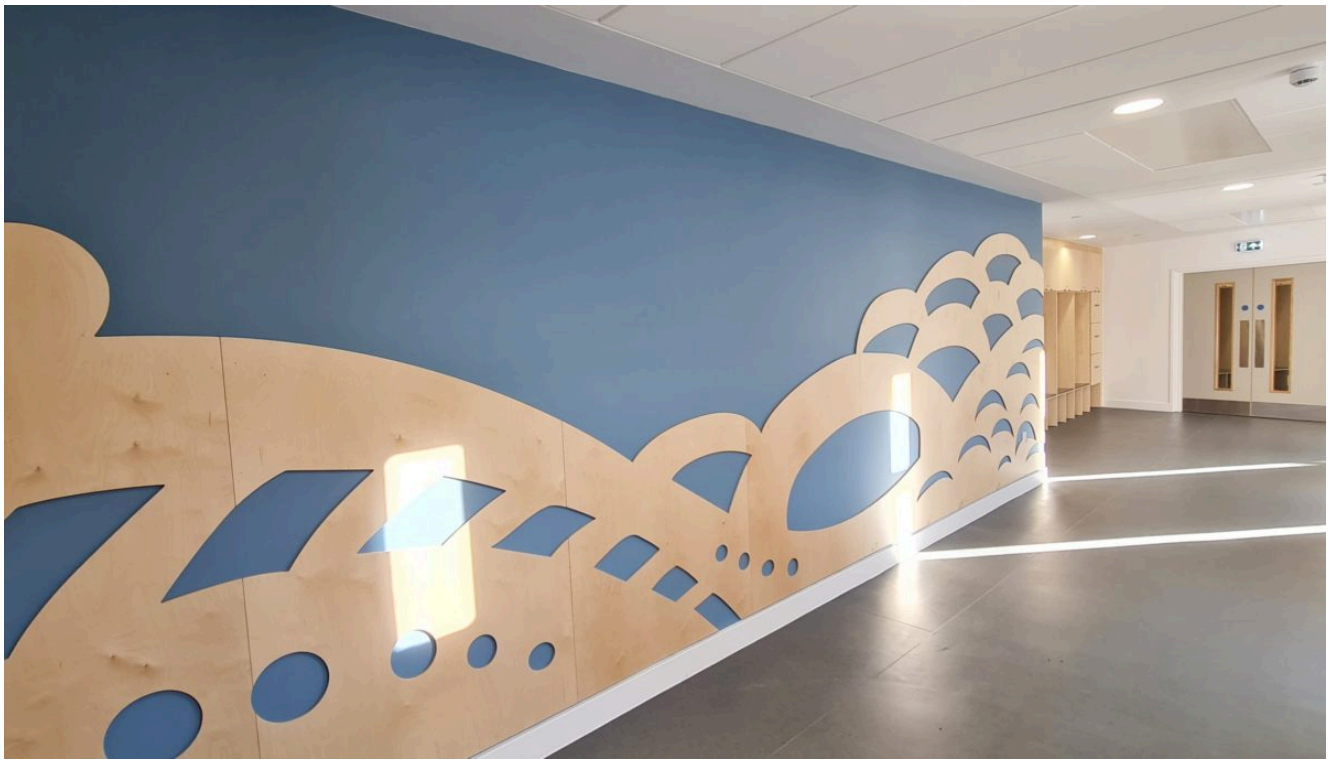
by – and are designed to be calming for the pupils, many of whom are on the autistic spectrum.

Lesley explained to us the importance of certain features both inside and outside the school – and she delighted in telling us all about it and that even the roof of this new building is covered in wildflowers. There are individual outside areas for each wing of the school and a communal play area outside.

She said: “This school has been a particularly fulfilling project with all the design work being conducted “in house at City of Edinburgh Council” I have loved contributing the interior design to this beautiful architectural space. The wild flower roof and engagement with the school community have inspired the wayfinding, colours and finishes, a biophilic environment to create peaceful welcoming school, with pilot designs informing furniture selection and design to support learning and wellbeing for all, I really look forward to seeing the children and young people enjoying it once they have settled in.”

butterfly class







Using her creative interior design skills Lesley devised a new system enabling all pupils to hang artwork on the classroom walls using a “Velcro receptive” pin boards on the walls, making sure that the school will be maintained in the pristine condition it is delivered.

Signage is important at St Crispin’s as children with autism learn to exchange single pictures for the item or activity they want. This Picture Exchange Communication System ensures

that everyone has their own sign – which can be put up outside classrooms or even the new swimming pool to show where they are in the building.

The school design also incorporates signage by Edinburgh based Lucy Richards, Creative Director at StudioLR on Breadalbane Street, who had created the Any Disability signs which are intended to encourage awareness of people with invisible disabilities.

Classrooms have been named Wildflower, Meadow and Valley and Forest with each one having its own assigned colour and tactile wayfinding – some of which is inspired by pupils' artwork. Each classroom has furniture to suit the pupils who will learn there and Lesley explained the setup is designed to be completely flexible with modular furniture which can be moved about at different times and for different purposes. Lesley has told us before about her liking of biophilic environments which create a calm holistic atmosphere, all the more important in the case of St Crispin's.

There is also an Art Classroom, a Music room, a Playroom, a Sensory Room with special mood lighting, a Soft Play area, a cooking classroom where children will learn by doing and a dining hall where everyone can eat together.

Lesley said she is particularly pleased with the colour coded panels which denote each classroom area, and the laser cut plywood design which has been applied to the internal walls. This feature was created in collaboration with pupils and teachers who drew what they saw in nature outside the existing school. The artwork was then translated into the final design by Edinburgh based artist Emily Hogarth.

Emily (photographed below) is an illustrator who “captures the magical in the everyday”. Her paper cut work is often used to capture special life moments like weddings and babies. Last Christmas she was invited to design the First Minister's

Christmas card, but on this occasion she was allowed to make much bigger items which have now been put in place St Crispin's, adorning the hallways. Her other fabulous artwork may be seen in the Royal Hospital for Children and Young People where she designed a new space for children designed around the city and its landmarks.

Emily said: "The whole vision was all to be inspired by nature and the new location. where they have all these trees around them. It is a really good way to communicate to the children through nature. I just do the pretty part design the concept and digitally draw it to the right specifications for manufacturing. I love working on jobs that improve spaces for children, quite frankly, I worked on the Sick Kids Hospital, and getting to work on this school with children who as you know have extra needs and actually sometimes get overlooked in society, it's nice to be able to make sure their spaces are the best they can be. To be a little a little part of that kind of process is a rewarding job. I would say for me as an illustrator."

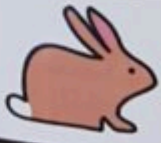






Classroom

rabbit class





Rhoda MacDougall has been headteacher at St Crispin's for only two years, joining the 54 pupil school just six weeks before the pandemic hit. She says that she claims no responsibility

for the lovely new surroundings that everyone is looking forward to moving into.

She said: "We've had to get through the pandemic with a building that's maybe not fit for purpose anymore. And I don't want to be disrespectful to this building because there are people who have had their entire careers here or their child's gone through every year of education here. The old building has served a lot of children and families and staff and people are very affectionate about the building. It has withstood the test of time and they have had tremendous support from local people here too. The children have given gifts and made cards for neighbours.

"The new school has sweeping wide corridors, soundproofing, beautiful artwork on the walls and it is all so carefully designed within the idea of the woodland and the new conservation area that we are moving into. The entire building just looks stunning. It looks brand new, but looks as though it belongs in the environment. The architect has been so accommodation and has listened to what our children and young people need. Everything in an environment can be a barrier or a support to our pupils and right now the building has become a huge barrier to learning and having an inclusive life.

"Our children have severe and complex additional support needs and the majority of our young people are on the autistic spectrum as well. We want our children to feel that they belong there. They deserve the absolute best and that's certainly what they have delivered in this building."

<https://stcrispinsedin.com>







Classroom

rabbit class

