

Merchants' Academy

Bristol UK

The landscape design for Merchants' Academy aims to integrate the school's landscape into its function, providing stimulating areas for relaxation, learning and play within a safe, creative and ecologically balanced setting.

The landscape features a central courtyard space with seating and sensory planting, which forms an external heart for the Academy and offers opportunities for gathering and contemplation.

A separate social area is designed to ease the transition of Year 7 students into secondary school. Characterised by colourful blue paving and with zones of recycled rubber surface, this allows space for exercise and play in a safe and unthreatening environment.

Plant species have been selected for their scent, texture, colour and wildlife value. A series of sheltered teaching gardens contain species appropriate to adjacent departments, for example edible plants such as herbs and rhubarb growing next to the cookery department.

The site's existing ecological value is enhanced through the introduction of a diverse range of habitats, including indigenous woodland planting, damp grassland swales (these also forming part of the site-wide drainage strategy), wildflower meadows, native hedgerow planting and wildlife-friendly ornamental planting.

Site Area: 3.2 Hectares
Client: Department for Children, Schools and Families
 Society of Merchant Venturers
Architects: Penoyre & Prasad
Engineers: Buro Happold
Quantity Surveyors: Dobson White Boulcott Ltd
Overall Project Value: £24 million



Top: Landscape masterplan
 Above: Teaching garden
 Left: Sensory planting; Central courtyard