



Partners in Construction

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MP opens new Nettlebed Community School built by Beard

The Oxfordshire village of Nettlebed has celebrated the opening of its new primary school and community centre. It was built by Beard of Oxford, who were appointed by the project's consultants, Atkins Ltd, on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council.

Local MP Boris Johnson officially opened the new £2m building by unveiling a plaque, and joined an audience of school staff, governors, parents, and representatives of the local community as 100 pupils performed a musical drama celebrating historical events since the school was founded in 1846.

Oxfordshire County Council funded most of the project by disposing of the schools' previous premises, which dated from the 1920s. The rest of the funding came from South Oxfordshire District Council and the local community, which is selling the original Victorian school building it has used as a community centre since 1928.

The new school is a modern, single-story building designed to complement its woodland setting and provide level disability access throughout. The building housing the primary school includes a purpose-built pre-school room, four classrooms, an IT suite, two resource areas for artwork and cookery, a special needs room for teaching small groups, offices, a staff room and a fully equipped school kitchen where pupils' meals are prepared from scratch. The school hall has a folding wall so that it can be partitioned to provide flexible space that the community can hire for social events and club meetings.

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The foyer and library area features a locally produced stained glass window depicting nettles and other wildlife. The window is set into the curved flint and brickwork wall at the school's entrance, and was specially commissioned from local artist Lyn Clayden following a grant from the Swyncombe Educational Trust.

Outside there is a pre-school play area, a playground, and an all-weather multi-purpose sports pitch available for community use outside school hours. A quiet garden area will commemorate Mrs Rosemary Moore, the school's previous headteacher, who initiated the replacement school project but died in post before she could see it realised.

Bob Worsell, Headteacher of Nettlebed Primary School, said: "Everyone who sees the school thinks it's very beautiful. It's a very high quality build, and we achieved everything we hoped for because Beard managed to find efficient ways of delivering certain aspects of the design."

Atkins of Oxford were the project's multi-disciplinary consultants. Project Manager Andrew Whitehead of Atkins said: "Atkins and Beard worked well together and completed the project in under a year. Atkins' design was fully complemented by Beard's high standard of workmanship. The school and the community have repeatedly thanked Atkins and Beard for the high grade design and fine workmanship we have delivered, and they have commented on how well the new building meets their expectations."

Mark Beard, Managing Director of Swindon and Oxford-based Beard, said: "This has been a very exciting project for everyone involved. We are delighted that Beard's craftsmanship and modern management techniques have helped to create a lovely building that can be appreciated by everyone in the Nettlebed community."

Beard (www.beard-construction.co.uk) operates throughout central southern England and undertakes construction projects worth up to £6m. Established in 1892, the company has offices in Swindon and Oxford and employs 160 people. Beard's Managing Director, Mark Beard, was Oxfordshire Businessman of the Year in 2004.

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Beard company facts and figures

- Established 1892
- £33m turnover in 2005 (up from £22m in 2004)
- 160 employees
- Engaged in the Construction Best Practice Programme
- Quality assured to BS EN ISO 9001:2000
- SAFE Contractor
- Member of the Considerate Contractor Scheme
- Investor in People
- Chartered Institute of Building training partner
- Mark Beard awarded Oxfordshire Businessman of the Year 2004
- Beacon Company
- Winner of the 2006 Wiltshire Business Training and Development Award

Picture caption:

Boris Johnson MP formally opened the new £2m Nettlebed Community School built by Beard. Photo by courtesy of the Henley Standard.

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