

**PRESS ENQUIRIES**

Claire Curtice Publicists  
mail@clairecurtice.co.uk  
+ 44 (0) 7775 562 264

**Tim Ronalds Architects**

## PRESS RELEASE

**NEW SCHOOL BUILDING FOR SOUTHWARK  
INCLUSIVE LEARNING SERVICE (SILS 3)**

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Tim Ronalds Architects has completed a new building for Southwark Inclusive Learning Service for key stage 3 (SILS 3) in Peckham, south London. The pupil referral unit (PRU) provides broad and balanced education for 11-14 year olds who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion from mainstream schools, with the aim of helping to reintegrate them.

Commissioned by London Borough of Southwark, the spacious and light-filled 1,800m<sup>2</sup> building provides a safe, calm and purposeful learning environment.

Southwark Inclusive Learning Service (SILS) is the only PRU for 11-16 year olds maintained by Southwark local authority. SILS operates on two sites across the borough. The key stage 4 facility (SILS 4) is by London Bridge, and key stage 3 (SILS 3) is in this new multi-purpose building at Davey Street, Peckham.

As a majority of secondary schools have benefitted from infrastructure investments, Southwark Council was equally determined to provide the best possible environment for students who were not in mainstream education.

The building designed by Tim Ronalds Architects sets a new standard for PRUs, which typically have had a defensive exterior – with security a priority, there are strict controls on access and exits. SILS 3 has a secure entrance lobby with space for students and guests to be welcomed in a dignified, non-threatening manner. The exterior of the building is softened by perimeter planting, and durable and beautiful materials resist abuse and vandalism.

While SILS' purpose is to provide a short-stay learning environment before students are reintegrated into a mainstream or more appropriate school, the new building embodies a timeless and robust design, with finishes delivered to a high standard for lasting value. Great attention has been paid to every aspect of design, from the layout to finishes and details, to ensure that the facilities work well and can be easily maintained. Southwark Council's determination to build the best possible new school led to a traditional contract, rather than design-and-build, ensuring that quality and detail weren't compromised.

SILS 3 replaces a 1970s building which was purpose-built as a children's home. The new building, which faces St George's Way opposite Burgess Park, is strategically designed to occupy the northern boundary of the site, shaped around the old building, with barely a metre gap between them. This allowed the existing school facilities to remain operational without disruption while the new building was constructed. Once SILS 3 was occupied, the older building was demolished to create an open recreational space and a large multi-use games area.

With a capacity for 60 pupils and a teacher-to-student ratio of one to four, the building is designed with the objective of providing a safe and nurturing setting which responds to the individual needs of its students, some of whom may experience anxieties and vulnerabilities which impair their ability to fully engage with education.

The strategy has been to create a simple sustainable building with a legible plan, which requires minimal operation and maintenance.

The two-storey building is surrounded by residential streets, with the entrance located on a quiet cul-de-sac to offer privacy when pupils arrive at the school. The elevations are a near-white brick, which reflects the sun and brings a deliberately cheerful and optimistic composition to an otherwise protected setting. The elevations have large windows with white, picture-frame surrounds and louvred panels, which are reminiscent of 19th century villas. The interior has oak floors, maple joinery and pine slatted ceilings, which provide excellent acoustics for teaching and bring a calm, warm and domestic feel to the spaces.

The design was based on observation, consultation and research into the life of a pupil referral unit, with practice director Tim Ronalds shadowing teachers at the school to understand the design factors that could benefit the children and teachers. The resulting design has generous classrooms with wide doorways and corridors and open vistas.

With smaller class sizes of six to eight pupils, teachers can give greater attention to students. SILS 3 includes spaces for specialist staff to deliver a range of interventions, e.g. emotion regulation, mentoring, socialisation, as well as a basic school curriculum. The building also provides classroom spaces for curriculum subjects of English, mathematics, humanities, and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, along with dedicated spaces for practical subjects including art, sciences, music, information and communications technology (ICT) and home economics. In addition, there are spaces specially for art therapy, counselling or other confidential sessions.

The corridors are designed as light-filled wide spaces with views out to the play spaces or the adjacent park. These are key spaces for socialisation, as well as break-out spaces to diffuse escalating situations. The dedicated dining hall and assembly hall both have direct access into the central grassed court, and all routes lead to this space, offering safe areas for relaxation, time-out and unstructured socialisation over break, lunch and at the end of the school day.

All rooms, including the staff room, have glazed entrances for a sense of transparency. Toilets are provided as individual restrooms.

A separate space on the ground floor, with its own entrance, is commonly referred to as SILS 6, and caters for students on short fixed-term exclusions from mainstream schools.

The building is highly sustainable, adopting a passive approach based on simple yet effective systems, robust detailing and durable materials, which meets the Mayor's Standards in the London Plan. The fixed windows throughout the scheme feature openable ventilation louvres with a secure inward opening operation so that staff can control airflow in the building. Photovoltaics are concealed behind a perforated brick screen at roof level. The design has achieved a BREEAM certification of Very Good.



Tim Ronalds said:

*"Our aim was to make a calm, warm, and safe educational environment that might help improve the life chances of the children. It had to be robust and unbreakable, but look normal. Above all, we wanted the new building to feel cheerful and optimistic."*

Jeremy Peakin, Project Manager, London Borough of Southwark, said:

*"Tim Ronalds Architects and the entire construction team have provided us with an asset of the highest architectural quality which is performing its function admirably."*

Yomi Adewoye, Headteacher, SILS, said:

*"Our new building is an investment for the pupils who attend SILS, and also for the whole community. It shows our students that we value and care about them, and that's a really crucial factor in their journey of self-worth. The building has now been in use for a year, and it is having a profound impact on how we operate as a school."*

**Press enquiries:**

Claire Curtice Publicists  
07775 562264  
mail@clairecurtice.co.uk

**Notes to editors:**

<b>Address:</b>	SILS 3, 2 Davey Street, Southwark, London SE15 6LF
<b>Construction value:</b>	£8.6m
<b>Site area:</b>	0.42 hectares
<b>Gross internal area in m2:</b>	1,800m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Client:</b>	London Borough of Southwark
<b>Architect:</b>	Tim Ronalds Architects
<b>Design team:</b>	Tim Ronalds, Anna Bardos, Adam Goodfellow, Jade Yianni
<b>Structural engineer:</b>	Waterman Structures
<b>Services engineer:</b>	Waterman Building Services
<b>Civil engineer:</b>	Waterman Structures
<b>Quantity surveyor:</b>	Faithful + Gould
<b>Project management:</b>	Faithful + Gould
<b>Contractor:</b>	Gilbert-Ash
<b>Photos:</b>	© Jim Stephenson



**Tim Ronalds Architects** is a London-based architectural practice established in 1982, which has established a reputation for buildings of outstanding quality and character.

The practice specialises in arts, education, masterplanning and conservation projects, and is committed to working on projects with a clear social agenda.

Notable award-winning projects for the arts include: Hackney Empire, London (2004); Wilton's Music Hall, London (2015); The Malthouse, The King's School, Canterbury (2019).

Notable education projects include: Clarendon Muse, Watford Grammar School for Boys, Hertfordshire (2008); The Space performing arts centre, Sevenoaks School (2010); Colyer-Fergusson Music Building, University of Kent, Canterbury (2012); The Richard Record Sixth Form Centre, Magdalen College School, Oxford (2017); Sevenoaks School Science and Technology Centre (2018); and Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, London (2019).

Current projects include: Aisher House, a new boarding house for Sevenoaks School, the latest phase in the practice's masterplan for the school campus; a new sixth form centre and library for Worth School in Sussex; a Thames-side café for City of London School; and the Quentin Blake Centre for Illustration at New River Head in Islington.

The practice has achieved significant awards success. Recent wins include a 2021 AJ Retrofit Award, 2021 RIBA National Award, RIBA South East Building of the Year Award and RIBA South East Conservation Award for The Malthouse, The King's School, Canterbury (2019); and 2019 RIBA London Award for the new Lower School, Alleyn's School (2019).

[www.timronalds.co.uk](http://www.timronalds.co.uk)



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