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The Lycée Maximilien Perret in France

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PEB Exchange Programme on Educational Building

leave the ASMS to attend their part-time role as explainers at the Investigator Science Centre for a year 5 class on forces. On the weekend students might access the online archive lecture series on biotechnology held at Flinders University during the week.

Achieving the vision

The school will open in January 2003. Preparation for initial staff appointments is underway, the curriculum is being developed and staff development programmes are being planned. Teaching in a student-centred environment in a building with no traditional classrooms or laboratories will be a challenge, and staff development is seen as a critical part of the success of the school. The staff will be trained in how to use the building as a "learning tool", in much the same way as they are already trained in the use of information and communications technology. Staff will be expected to contribute to the ongoing professional development charter of the school.

Further information about the school is available from: Kenn Fisher, Partner, Educational Planning and Design, Woods Bagot, e-mail: kenn.fisher@woodsbagot.com.au

Ron Lake, ASMS Director, e-mail: lake.ron@saugov.sa.gov.au

Peter Sachs, ASMS Project Director, e-mail: sachs.peter@saugov.sa.gov.au

ASMS Web site: www.asms.sa.edu.au

THE LYCÉE MAXIMILIEN PERRET *IN FRANCE*

The new premises of the *Lycée Maximilien Perret*, an upper secondary and continuing education institution, meets many – but, as experience has shown, not all – of its users' needs. Why was it necessary to relocate the *lycée* in the first place? Which aspects of the new buildings effectively meet users' needs, and which facilities have not lived up to expectations? This article will examine these questions in the spirit of post-occupancy evaluation.

The Maximilan Perret school, familiarly known as "Max'P", combines programmes of initial education within the secondary school system, alternating in-school/enterprise-based training and continuing education for adults (*Groupement d'Établissements de Formations à l'Énergie,* G.E.F.En, providing training in

Lycée Maximilien Perret

energy-related fields).[1] The *lycée* provides technical training in jobs ranging from skilled worker to engineer, with specialisation in air-conditioning and sanitation, environmental protection, building management, etc.

The *lycée* was originally created as a vocational training school in 1887 to meet the need for skilled workers in plumbing and roofing, and later evolved in response to industrial needs and institutional changes. The *lycée* had outgrown the old house in Vincennes, a town on the outskirts of Paris, where it had been located since 1953: outbuildings had been transformed into classrooms, courtyards were occupied by prefabricated buildings and basements were filled with workshops and technical facilities.

New premises were built in the town of Alfortville, a few kilometres outside Paris, and were inaugurated in May 2000. The total cost was EUR 55 million, of which EUR 9 million were for technical training facilities (in the fields of sanitation and heating, refrigeration, air conditioning, etc.). Nearly all of the staff, strongly attached to the Vincennes site, were opposed to building the new school. The educational programme was modified at the time of the move with the introduction of general streams. However, the staff of "Max'P" were able to participate in the design of the school and the monitoring of its construction. The construction of the building was dissociated from the new pedagogical infrastructure – which led to difficulties – since the administration wanted partner enterprises (which were often owned by former pupils) to participate in building the school; according to former principal Claude Gyral, these graduates of the school "really put their heart into building a fine project".

The *lycée* moved to its new premises in 1997, the year of its 110th anniversary. The architect, Massimiliano Fuksas, described the new site as follows: "This architecture is

1. The G.E.F.En has developed partnerships with educational institutions and enterprises in Portugal, Spain, China, Tunisia and Gabon.

Electrical engineering facilities

Computer-assisted design room

meant to be open to the town and its space, which is prolonged by and connected with the space of the buildings. This is achieved by the breaks in the volumes of the buildings and the transparent, ceiling-high glass walls on portions of the ground floor. Thus, the variety and complexity of these spaces creates a multifaceted interaction between the *lycée* building and the town, despite the small size of the site on which the school is built. The lack of public and recreation areas on the ground floor is offset by the spacious areas of the first floor, which are also open to the town and its space."

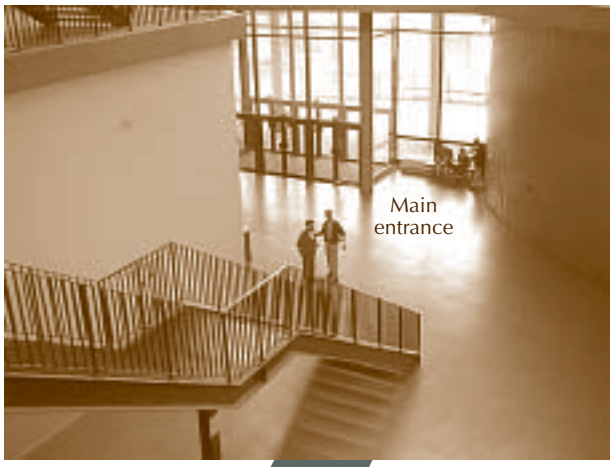
Some years on, users can now assess the premises, and the current principal, Bernard Plasse, was willing to share his views, both positive and negative, on this subject. Users appreciate the fact that that there are separate, dedicated buildings for the different schools: one for the *lycée*, another for the apprenticeship training centre and a third for the G.E.F.En. The buildings are well soundproofed, which is particularly appreciated by teachers. The school is brightly lit, thanks to its many large windows, even in workshops.

Other aspects are less positive due for example to spatial or budgetary restraints and not necessarily to the architectural design. There is no recreation courtyard of sufficiently large size and the buildings are constructed on too small a site and surrounded by a parking area that is sometimes too small to accommodate the vehicles of staff and visitors. There are three stories of classrooms located above the technical training facilities, which poses safety problems. It is difficult for pupils to circulate; since they do not have an area where they can relax, they tend to linger in the school's complex network of corridors. Some fittings are not of high enough quality to withstand pupils' use, such as the most frequently used doors, which are already damaged.

Lastly, common areas were not well thought out, and there is no area where pupils can congregate and socialise when they are not in class.

The *Lycée Maximilien Perret* has a surface area of 27 000 m^2, 5 000 m^2 of which consist of workshops. There are 30 rooms equipped for specialised training, 20 workshops of 250 m^2 each in which pupils work in real-life situations using state-of-the-art equipment,

Entrance to the G.E.F.En



11 design and assembly workshops, over 100 computers, a multimedia room, a conference room, a documentation and information centre and a 150 m^2 technical resource centre organised into specific areas, a cafeteria and a residence for pupils and apprentices with 114 standard rooms and ten rooms for disabled pupils (the residence is managed by a private association).

The annual enrolment consists of some 1 300 pupils in initial education and 1 100 trainees in continuing education. There are over 250 staff members responsible for management, maintenance, teaching, counselling and security. Its operating budget is approximately EUR 2.3 million.

The "Max'P" Association, which acts as a link between former and current pupils, is housed on the premises. Over 10 000 former pupils belong to this association, some 5 000 of whom work in the construction sector. The association publishes a newsletter of job vacancies and jobs wanted.


Bridge to the resource centre

SCHOOL WORKS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM: A NEW APPROACH TO LOCAL SCHOOL DESIGN

School Works, a not-for-profit company in the United Kingdom, has developed a secondary school design process which enables communities to create unique school buildings that cater for their own particular needs. At the heart of this process is the basic principle that it is the people who work and learn in a school building every day who really understand its ethos, its needs, its strengths and its weaknesses, and that truly involving the school community will generate an innate sense of ownership and respect for the buildings. School Works has put its participatory process into practice at an inner-city school in London.

Traditionally in the United Kingdom, local education authorities have acted as clients on school building projects. Head teachers and heads of department are usually consulted on *pre-conceived* design ideas, and pupils are only occasionally given a chance to see designs before they are built. This lack of engagement with school communities means that schools are designed according to the priorities of individuals who may never use the buildings once they are constructed.

In addition, many schools currently under construction show little evidence of fresh thinking about the way learning environments are designed and used, and little emphasis on the need for quality design, despite government commitment to improving the fabric of school buildings.[1]

What is School Works?

School Works is an independent organisation that is funded by the Department for Education and Skills to explore new approaches to learning developments in education and make recommendations for new ways of designing and building school environments. The company believes that the design of school buildings has both a direct and an indirect impact on learning. School Works argues that as the function of schools is rapidly changing, it is vitally important that design keeps up. It is

1. The current British Government has pledged to build or refurbish more than 600 schools over the next three years and has set aside the huge sum of GBP 8.5 billion (EUR 13.8 billion) to improve education building stock.