

## winner: successful performance nottingham BSF



Capita Architecture, Cardiff was part of Carillion Plc's *inspiredspaces* consortium bidding for Nottingham Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

Following pre-qualifying dialogue with Nottingham City Council, *inspiredspaces* was selected as one of three bidding consortiums for Wave 1 of Nottingham BSF. Design work and school engagement started on three 'sample schools' in April 2007.

Nottingham's brief for their BSF schools programme was challenging and exciting.

The intention is to reinvigorate deprived areas in Nottingham through new schools that are to become a 'hub' and the focus of a community with truly Transformational Education environments. The detail of this brief was imaginatively aspirational and sought new boundaries for curriculum delivery. In response to this opportunity the Cardiff studio flourished and excelled.

The sample school designs developed in the three-day long school engagement meetings every other week for 12 weeks. Often ideas and designs would be radically different, sometimes changing overnight, in order to include input from all stakeholders.

Throughout this versatile and inclusive enclave Capita Architecture became the 'recognisable face' of *inspiredspaces* offering to the local authority, school staff and governing bodies.

This relationship was forged on the basis of our approach to the school engagement meetings; from



the outset we insisted on listening to the school and local authority's needs before responding with proposals.

This avoided alienation through a perceived 'we know best' attitude (an approach adopted by other bidders) and soon gained confidence and trust. The relationship worked both ways motivating *inspiredspaces* to offer the best schools which took Carillion into Preferred Bidder status in January of this year.

*"We have found your candor, support and willingness to go that extra mile invaluable. Your patience over detail has been tremendous. Trust, affability, honesty and lack of arrogance (no "we know best!"). You have shown yourselves willing to listen to the fine detail of our concern and have responded with imagination and flair."*

*Deputy Head of Big Wood School, Colin McGowan*

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During Preferred Bidder stage the schools were keen to progress the winning schemes further. This soon became a weekly review that went on to include all of the school staff and pupil design competitions. Throughout this period Carillion were committed to financially closing the sample schools by May 2008 and placed considerable emphasis on Capita Architecture guiding the school engagement to a conclusion acceptable to all.

Reflecting on the process Colin McGowan stated:

*"What has been especially impressive has been your ability to listen since Designated Bidder stage. All the warnings that we were given led us to believe that dialogue would stop at this point. If anything, the ability to listen and redefine the design has been more acute. Fantastic! Capita Architecture have been particularly keen to interpret our ideas in a way that makes sense to us and this will hopefully mean that we have a building that pupils and staff believe that they have "ownership" of."*

Building works started in June soon after Financial Close and are due for completion in September 2010.

The Cardiff studio has already secured a further primary school from this bid and look forward to continuing this success with new schools from Nottingham in 2009.

## keys to success

- Skilled response to an imaginatively aspirational brief
- School engagement and understanding aspirations
- Continued commitment to design excellence
- A committed and enthusiastic design studio
- Listening and interpreting the needs of multiple client's