



Left to right: images 1 and 2 - the innovative Kalwall translucent bricks, image 3 - part of the new front elevation

New library and IT centre for top grammar school

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Lee Evans Partnership has transformed a 1960s gym into a striking new library and IT centre for Barton Court Grammar School, Canterbury, demonstrating how much can be achieved within a limited budget with imagination and an innovative building component.

The modern grammar school is situated in idyllic surroundings close to the old city walls of Canterbury in the conservation area and World Heritage Site of St. Augustine's Abbey. The heart of the school is still the "Old House", a fine Georgian manor house, built in 1750, with its historic lake, ancient trees, gardens, and playing fields.

The project involved the conversion of part of a 1960s classroom block, an unattractive two storey gym which occupied a prime location comprising one of the three sides of a would-be quadrangle around the lake, facing the handsome 'Old House'. With limited fenestration at the front, the gym's main windows and views were to the rear of the building overlooking a residential area.

The solution was to 'turn the building around'. Six long elegant windows have been introduced at first floor level and are used to capitalise on the views over the lake towards the 'Old House.' To the rear a ceiling to floor wall of translucent bricks, using the innovative building product 'Kalwall', floods light into the building and effectively obscures views over neighbouring housing. For ease and speed of construction the Kalwall brick panels were pre-fabricated to the exact size and configuration and then brought on site. A prime consideration for the school was to provide a healthy indoor climate for its students. Kalwall does just this. Developed and manufactured in the USA, it is a highly insulating, diffuse light transmitting material and uses a matrix of glass prisms to absorb external light levels and then redistributes an interior light that virtually eliminates glare, hot-spots and shadows.

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