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SCHOOL REBUILD CATERS TO EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF THE FUTURE

By **Angela Waller**

With a striking view overlooking the city, Cashmere Primary School has been nestled on the Port Hills for more than a century. The beauty and uniqueness of the site is reflected in its current rebuild and refurbishment, which supports and enhances the school's educational vision.

As part of the Christchurch Schools Rebuild (CSR) programme, the project incorporates both the new build of a two-storey flexible learning space, as well as a full refurbishment of all existing learning and administration spaces. Following an in-depth consultation with the school and its community, a brief was developed by the Ministry of Education to deliver an architecturally-designed solution, reflecting the character and values of Cashmere Primary School.



The development caters to the school's fully inclusive and collaborative learning environment, says Principal Gavin Burn. "Every school is different and it was great to have had input into the design process for our school. We now have flexible learning spaces to best meet the personalised needs of all learners, as we help prepare them for their futures. It's also important to remember that the quality of the teaching and learning is what's important for the children – and the environment is there to support and enhance that."

Cashmere Primary currently has 460

children on the roll, from years 1 to 8. As the school was originally established in 1905, the buildings varied in age and style across the site. Following the demolition and removal of several existing prefabs, the new two-storey building has a large open 'L-shaped' space on both levels. Each floor features smaller 'breakout rooms' with glass doors for increased visibility, some spaces in the form of quirky nooks – all providing the flexibility to enhance teaching and learning.

"The children might be working independently or as a smaller group – they might be working on

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a collaborative project, or having a one-on-one conference with their teacher," he says. "These breakout spaces provide opportunities for smaller group teaching, independent learning and collaborating. It's a very inclusive environment the staff can always see where everyone is and what they're doing."

The first floor of the new building is shared by year 3 and 4 students with five teachers working collaboratively, and the second-floor groups year 5 and 6 together, with four teachers working collaboratively. This allows for the children to learn based on their needs, rather than just their age. "All children have their own homeroom teacher, but throughout the day they may work with any teachers for different subjects based on their own learning abilities and next steps." Both floors feature a project space and a kitchen area.

Burn says students learning together in shared spaces also allows them to better support each other and learn from each other. "The school has been working collaboratively for the past three to four years and the new learning spaces have provided the opportunity to really make things happen. We've had great feedback from parents and the children love the shared sense of space, with a wider group of peers and



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teachers – and some staff say they would never go back to having their own classrooms.

"Times are changing – workplaces don't look like they did 20 to 30 years ago, so neither should classrooms. We can't keep doing what we have always done and meet the needs of our children to adequately prepare them for their future. A key difference from the traditional way of schooling is that our teaching and learning is more responsive to the children's individual needs."

The new building is named Kāramu, after a native plant of the Port Hills. "The redevelopment has also allowed us to learn more about the cultural aspects of our local environment. We are working with local iwi to identify what's important to our school, with

regards to the environment, school and Māori culture, and to recognise what would have been here in nature, growing on this site."

The project began in April 2016 and is being carried out by HRS Construction. "The HRS project team has been amazing and fully supportive in this ministry-led project," Burn says. "And in regards to working on a school site and ensuring the health and safety of our students, staff and community, they have been faultless."

One of the completed refurbished buildings which originally contained three separate classrooms has also been brought to life as a flexible learning space for year 7 and 8, with two breakout rooms, new floor coverings and acoustic wall linings. HRS plans to complete the refurbishment



of the remaining buildings for the 2018 year, including a shared learning space for the school's year 1 and 2 learners.

"It's been a successful project so far and everyone is really happy with the results," says HRS project manager Andrew Marshall. "We had a tight programme for the new two-storey block to be ready for the first term of 2017, but we got there, thanks to a great team across the board – the Ministry of Education, consultants, suppliers, subcontractors and the school. Now we're moving onto completing the remaining building refurbishments on the site."

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