

# Malvern Valley Primary School

Architect:  
**NOW Architecture**

Project Address:  
**Abbotsford Avenue,  
Malvern East VIC 3145**

Project Cost:  
**\$2.1 m**

Occupation Date:  
**June 2006**

Capacity:  
**175**

Year Levels:  
**P - 6**

Malvern Valley Primary School sits within a developed residential precinct of an eastern suburb of Melbourne in the City of Stonnington. The suburb is characterised by single storey detached homes set back from the busy artery of Chadstone Road. It is adjacent to the City of Stonnington's Phoenix Park Community Centre which includes a hall, library, skate park, open space and adventure playground, making the area a very strong community magnet. The original school was destroyed by fire in March 2004.

Cowland North played an active role early in the Planning Process, as key decisions about the school's post-fire future were discussed. The architects evaluated various relocation options, including a generous offer from the City of Stonnington to use the Phoenix Park Community Centre.

It was decided however, that modifying and reusing the Centre would be detrimental to pedagogical response due to limited access to sun light and air, availability of playing fields and student safety (students would have to cross a road to access the Library if shared with the Community Centre). Consequently, the school voted unanimously to build a new school on the existing site. This decision process was an intense period of discussion, and gave Cowland North valuable insight into the values of the School which would inform the design.

Prior to the receiving the Education Specification, Cowland North presented a trial master-plan concept as a discussion paper to raise issues and stimulate points of discussion on a direction for the school's future. This early dialogue formed a framework for the School to develop their Educational Specification. The framework made it easier to recognise 'non-negotiable' issues and constraints, which in turn made the development of the design a smoother process.

A sample of key issues and opportunities identified through this planning dialogue includes:

- A desire to forge new links between the

School and Community.

- The School's pedagogy requires team teaching, zoning of junior, middle and senior students.
- The School was characterised by an intimate 'village-style' setting with good surveillance and relationships to the surrounding community parks, houses and facilities. Any future architectural solution must support this community culture.
- The School address was split between Abbotsford Avenue and Phoenix Park.

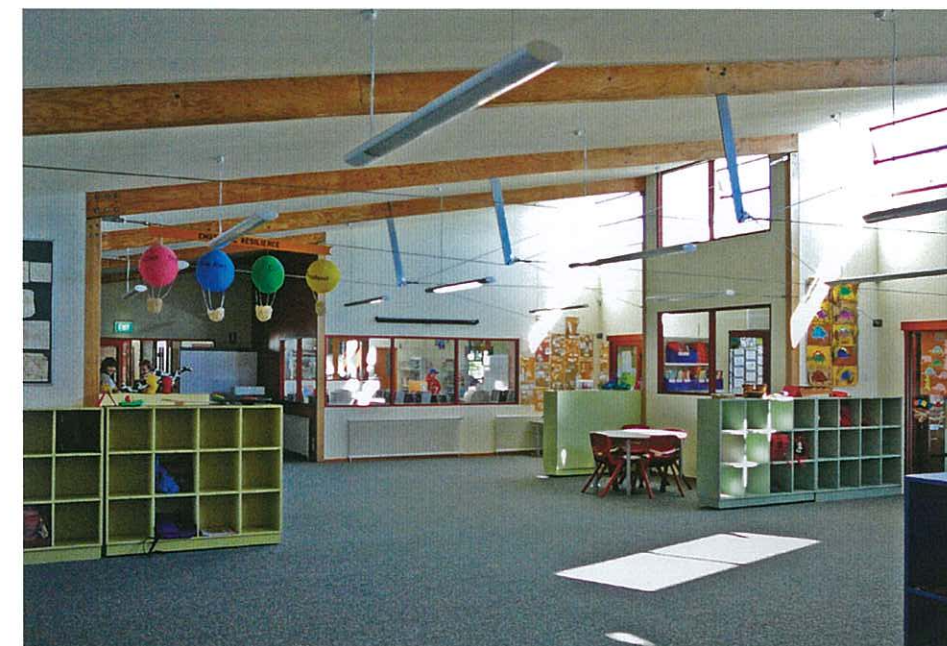
In direct response to the issues identified, design strategies were developed:

- The Library and Multi-Purpose Room are designed for community engagement. They can be accessed independently through a separate lobby and have access to WCs and Canteen.
- The design is based on an integrated arrangement of six homerooms, Library and Multi-Purpose room which enclose a central Studio space allowing for a wide variety of teaching and learning group sizes.
- This cluster model supports the pedagogical needs of team teaching and adds a new dimension to the cherished 'village style' School.

A great physical and psychological benefit of the design is the pitched ceilings. By using efficient structures with long spans, the volume of each classroom has been maximised to let in desirable sunlight and provide cross ventilation to give a sense of space and freedom.

Externally, the playfulness of the forms creates a friendly environment which includes courtyards and decks suitable for outdoor teaching. There are no corridors as "Travel" allowances have been absorbed to maximise teaching space.

The Homerooms, Multi-Purpose Rooms and Library have direct access to the outdoor areas providing more settings for teaching and learning.



The School was designed in three zones; a Public interface at Administration; a privileged Community/School zone containing the Multi Purpose Room and Library/IT Centre; and the private and secure School only flexible learning cluster. The cluster classroom layout provides a variety of spaces for individual and small group teaching (Withdrawal space), private classroom teaching (closed GPCs) and combined team teaching when open to the Studio or linked in a multi-use small group/teacher space.

The School wanted to retain the opportunity to close classrooms off from the Studio space, so glazed partitions were incorporated. These elements can be closed while still providing visual connectivity between the spaces.

The Multi-Purpose Room is connected to the Amphitheatre courtyard to allow activities such as Physical Education, Drama and after school care to expand outside. This space also functions as a Theatre where Drama classes can perform. The canteen can serve the Amphitheatre or the secondary Foyer to provide multiple options for public or school catering. Physical and Psychological Comfort provides for good educational outcomes and excellent energy efficiency.

