

Beormund School

Location: London Borough of Southwark, UK

Client: Southwark Council

Appointed: 2021

Beormund School in Peckham is a new build primary school for 56 pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. As such it has very special requirements. But the approach we have taken to its design – prioritising the experience of the school building for children, teachers and the local community – provides clear examples of concepts that can be applied to any new educational institution.

Pupils with SEMH often have a disassociation to education and might have been excluded from mainstream settings. Beormund School is designed to be a place to which they can form a positive emotional connection and where they can enjoy learning.

The entrance to the building is welcoming and open, a space for children to be greeted at the start of the day and wait to go together into their classrooms, as well as a place for visitors to the school to wait securely in an 'air-lock' style arrangement. The circulation around the ground floor is simple to understand and clearly defined, with key spaces along the corridor acting as route markers and calming zones.

Connecting a building's users to the natural world is a cornerstone of the Cullinan Studio approach to architecture. Nowhere is this more important than in a primary school. Our design takes every possible opportunity to bring the outdoors and nature into the everyday Beormund experience.

Built of modular timber cassettes and a glulam frame, Beormund School is a net zero carbon scheme, both in terms of energy use and embodied carbon. Cullinan Studio specialises in applying Passivhaus principles to minimise operational carbon consumption, and the construction process will use offsite, low carbon prefabrication to cut timescales and improve quality. At Beormund timber is used as both structure and finish to give the school a robust, but non-institutional feel, which we hope will also improve educational outcomes.



We have taken care to create 'moments of joy': the key spaces contain feature seating, an integrated fish tank, games equipment and a sensory wall. Spaces are designed with a relationship in scale to both adults and children; from child-size seating nooks set within walls, to a 'mouse-hole'

link that joins the quiet play room and the library. This gives playfulness and variety to the rooms, and allows the children to have spaces they feel are their own.