

## Press release

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**London Academy is topped out**

The fifth Foster and Partners designed academy has reached a construction milestone with the topping out ceremony of London Academy Edgware on 6 July 2005. Scheduled to open in September 2006, the new school is sited on the playing fields of the current London Academy, formerly known as The Edgware School, in the London Borough of Barnet. It forms part of the Government's current Academies Programme that seeks to improve educational standards, and will specialise in Business, Enterprise, and Information and Communications Technology (ICT), while also facilitating after-school use to promote lifelong learning. The development will also set in motion the regeneration of the local area by creating not only a centre of educational excellence, but also a catalyst for urban renewal and a valued facility for the wider community.

The academy is structured around a top-lit three-storey atrium, which lets daylight into the heart of the building and acts as a focus for the school. Functioning as a circulation courtyard, the atrium connects the upper and lower school and the common facilities, such as the theatre, library and restaurant areas. Students are organised into a lower and upper school, each with 'home bases' on separate levels around individual atria. Each home base level accommodates one year-group with its own social area, toilets and staff facilities, minimising movement, enhancing a sense of identity and improving security. This combines the benefits of learning in a smaller community, within a large school environment.

The specialist teaching spaces are located along the north side of the site, while the home bases open up on the south to the sheltered play areas. Staff rooms are centrally located, overlooking the communal atrium and home bases. Indoor sports facilities are located in a separate block and the academy is linked to the outdoor sports facilities by a pedestrian bridge, which allows safe access across a busy carriageway. London Academy will cater for students with Special Education Needs within the curriculum and will provide the central facility for Speech and Language Therapy in Barnet.

Paul Kalkhoven, Senior Partner at Foster and Partners said, "Our design approach to London Academy is a direct response to the educational brief. To that end, we have created a building that facilitates a home base system, combining the benefits of a more intimate learning environment with the sophisticated teaching facilities and opportunities that a larger school can offer."

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