

## Press release

06 November 2017

### Ashburnham Community School gets a state-of-the-art children's playground

The opening of the new children's playground at Ashburnham Community School in West London was met with shrieks of delight, as the children got a first taste of the recently transformed school grounds. The project was initiated and funded by The Bryan Adams Foundation, that has been supporting the school since 2014, and designed by Foster + Partners, working closely with playground designers Made From Scratch. The refurbishment is a key part of the school's strategy to create a holistic learning environment for its pupils. It replaces asphalt play areas with a dynamic mix of hard and soft surfaces, natural vegetation, and specially designed play structures for the school children, while also incorporating state-of-the-art sports courts.

Ben McMullen, Head of School, Ashburnham Community School said: "A school playground should be a safe, creative, and imaginatively stimulating space. Ashburnham has always had a large playground, but did not have the kind of outdoor space that was able to meet these needs of both its pupils and the community. We believe this project will be transformative in terms of pupils' wellbeing and physical development. Additionally, the two sports pitches allow for first-rate PE teaching, as well as the ability to host competitive sports on site. Enabling our children to take part in high-quality physical education is one of the school's top priorities."

Mr. Adams from The Bryan Adams Foundation said: "My foundation has supported many educational projects since it started a decade ago. Alongside supporting Ashburnham, it's also

**For further information**  
please contact Katy Harris at  
Foster + Partners,  
T +44 (0)20 7738 0455  
F +44 (0)20 7738 1107  
E [press@fosterandpartners.com](mailto:press@fosterandpartners.com)

supported a music bursary scheme at Chelsea Academy for young musicians, and is now very proud to support its local primary school by completely renovating the playground to provide a safer, more practical space for the children, not only for their sports, but for their development and learning.”

David Summerfield, Head of Studio, Foster + Partners, commented: “We wanted to create an urban oasis, made from different natural and sustainable materials that provided an engaging space for the children. The playground is a multisensory environment that caters to all ages, from sandpits and treehouses, to professional quality multipurpose sports courts. Ashburnham is a stone’s throw away from our studios in Battersea, and we are delighted to be able to give back to our local community in such a meaningful way.”

### The Playground

The beach sandpit is landscaped with boulders and untreated timber, and has a hardwood canopy that collects rainwater. This feeds a series of custom built steel and timber troughs, allowing children to interact and experiment with different materials, and creating a sensory environment for learning and play. A nest swing hidden in a bamboo grove, and a living willow pod perched on a platform create a hidden oasis within the school grounds, built with natural and sustainable materials.

The main climbing structure is over four meters high, and has been inspired by the idea of a dense ‘jungle’ that the children can climb up, under and through. This tangle of logs, balance beams, rope bridges, nets and green climbing vines is non-prescriptive in form, and can become anything the imagination allows, while providing varied physical challenges as children navigate the structure.

A timber treehouse, handcrafted from hardwood, nestles up the largest tree in the school grounds. Sympathetically responding to the form of the tree, it provides a high vantage point over the new playground, and a den for imaginative and socio-dramatic play. Situated at the end of the new sports pitches, is a new landscaped amphitheatre, large enough accommodate a whole class for outdoor lessons, or as an informal viewing area for the sports pitches.

The landscaping of the playgrounds has been carefully designed to include trees and a shrubbery that are low maintenance, yet provide seasonal variety throughout the year. The planting has been carefully planned to counteract air and noise pollution from the surrounding streets. Vegetable patches enrich the learning process, while the storage and lighting strategies have also been rationalised throughout the play areas.