



*The striking and futuristic £20 m Monkseaton High School in North Tyneside was officially opened on Friday 6 November, in a celebration led by one of the country's leading design thinkers.*

The awe-inspiring new building is a first for North Tyneside, and brings together innovation, design, sustainability and cost-effectiveness, to create an impressive and truly unique learning environment for the school's 900 students.

Monkseaton High School became England's first 'Trust School' in August 2007, and its trust partners include North Tyneside Council, Microsoft, Tribal Education and Prof. David Reynolds of Plymouth University. The Trust partnership benefits pupils in many ways, for example Microsoft supplies latest the ICT software as well as supporting projects to benefit students.

Monkseaton has been supplied with a range of technology solutions, such as Microsoft® SQL Server® data management software, network-management solutions like Microsoft System Center Configuration Manager and Microsoft Identity Lifecycle Manager, and productivity and collaboration tools like the Microsoft Office 2007 suites, Office SharePoint® Server 2007, and Office OneNote® 2007. [Click here to view the video Case Study.](#)

At Microsoft, we also see ourselves as a long-term supporter of the education innovations being developed at Monkseaton. Microsoft will be contributing professional expertise, strategic advice, and access to resources and programs that enhance how Monkseaton can use IT, promote increased flexibility and productivity, and support innovative teaching.

In addition to test scores, grade point averages, general social and economic data, and health histories, Monkseaton collects in-depth biological assessments of students' current health, fitness, and body rhythms to effectively personalize a student's education. The school also uses internationally standardized methodologies to conduct student self-assessments of proficiency in all subjects.

The teachers and students at Monkseaton use a range of technologies to collaborate, communicate, share learning resources, and provide opportunities for independent learning and to improve student achievement.

The new building was opened by Sir John Sorrel - a former chair of the Design Council and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment. His charity, The Sorrell Foundation, collaborated with staff and students at Monkseaton in the early stages of the new school's conception, and introduced key ideas about light, space, air and colour.



Sir John was joined by staff, students, and members of the trust (including Clare Riley and Steve Beswick from the MS UK Education Team) on the day to celebrate the opening.

Dr Paul Kelley, Headteacher, said:

*"After years of hard work, our dreams and aspirations have finally become a reality. All along, we have been dedicated to providing the best possible learning environment for our students, and I believe we have achieved that and more, with this fantastic new building, which has already been recognised as an outstanding example of school architecture."*

Its distinctive oval and aerodynamic shape originated from a government project that aimed to create an exemplar design of school that could potentially be used as a blueprint for all new schools, and Monkseaton students were actively involved in its conception.

The shape means it inherently requires less energy to heat or cool it and its orientation was specifically planned to maximise daylight but minimise over-heating.

Its domed roof places an emphasis on allowing natural light into the building, and very few ceilings have been installed between its three floors - instead daylight filters through a series of roof and wall lay-lights directly into the classrooms and throughout the building.

On darker days, light levels are boosted with '1,000 lux' lamps suspended from the roof.

A ceiling-free multi-use sports hall has been positioned at the very centre of the build, and open-plan teaching spaces and classrooms overlook the facility.

The design avoids the use of square classrooms, and incorporates triangular teaching spaces to create a 360 degree teaching environment which enables the teacher to be the focus of the students, wherever they are in the room.

Very few of the classrooms have ceilings, and most have been fitted with 'baffles', which help reduce acoustic reverberation.

Other features include a bistro-style dining area, a dance and drama studio, a video wall, music suite, recording studio, student-designed 'toilet pods' and several open-plan study areas.

Sustainability features, which include thermal solar panels to heat hot water, and a natural air ventilation system which uses 'wind catchers' incorporated into the school's roof, have recently earned it a 'very good' rating from BREEAM - a scheme that grades environmental and sustainable features in new buildings.



All of this has been achieved in just 69 weeks. Work began with the first sod cutting in June 2008 and was completed on time for pupils to move into the new building in October 2009. Demolition of the old 1970's Monkseaton High School buildings is now underway.

The innovative design was created for Monkseaton High School and North Tyneside Council by North East based architects Devereux, and building work was carried out by Shepherd Construction.

Project architect Ian Lancaster-Smith, Devereux Architects' Director, said:

*"It is an honour that the building is being opened by Sir John Sorrell, a campaigner for good design. The building's design is a direct response to the school's modern methods of teaching and learning. Today is a celebration of the culmination of effort made by the Trust, Paul Kelley, staff, students and the community who are now tasked to meet the challenges of effective teaching and learning in the 21st Century."*

Monkseaton High School has also been responsible for developing and testing ground-breaking education techniques, including degree modules in schools with its partner The Open University, guaranteed places at Newcastle University in Science and related subjects, and 'spaced learning', which hit national and international headlines recently.