

Open Doors

BY AMELIA WILLIAMS

Malvern College Pre-School has just completed a renovation and is ready to welcome its first students. We took a look around the brand new campus.

There are a lot of things to consider when you're designing a school. After all, it's where young minds are shaped each day, so it's not just a matter of making efficient use of the space you have on hand.

Thomas Chow Architects (TCA) designed the Malvern College Pre-School campus and oversaw the renovation of an older building in Yau Ma Tei. As well as creating an open, bright environment, the architects had to keep in mind the educational practices of the school, the many and varied needs of the staff and students, as well as keeping safety a priority.

Billy Tam, lead architect from TCA says, "There is no definition of a 'classroom' here; at one time this space can be a playground, while at other times it may be a reading corner." The campus has been planned in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) programme, where children learn through structured free-play. "We provide freedom for the children to interpret spaces in their own ways," adds Billy. "It's true that we have

amazing and innovative designs as our aim but, at the same time, we must bear in mind that children's safety is of utmost importance. Therefore, our design is a balance between safety and aesthetic expression."

With the ethos and principles of Malvern College behind it, the preschool campus has been designed to reflect the Reggio Emilia education philosophy, which views "environment as the third teacher". Jacqueline McNalty, Founding Principal of Malvern College Pre-School Hong Kong, explains, "Maximum exposure of different senses and stimulations are crucial for the development of a young child. We have incorporated many elements of nature into the campus, bringing the outdoors inside." One example is the Sand Pit, which allows students to explore and understand the world through sensory stimulation and enables experimental wet and dry play; it's designed to develop children's social, physical and creative/aesthetics skills as well as early experiences in mathematics and science. There's also a Wood Hut, Play Hut and Reading Loft. "An exciting environment encourages children to be more expressive, imaginative and creative, which augments several areas of the EYFS," says Jacqueline.

With the renovation now complete, the campus is ready for the first students to arrive in September. *EL*



Malvern is at Units 9-12, Coronation Circle, 1 Yau Cheung Road, Southwest Kowloon. malvernpreschool.hk

