

# ARCHITECTURE+DESIGN

A N I N D I A N J O U R N A L O F A R C H I T E C T U R E



## LIVELY OFFICE INTERIORS



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# Spaces that foster interaction and engagement

**Project:** Mann School, Delhi

**Architects:** Envisage, Delhi



Ar. Meena Murthy Kakkar



Ar. Vishal Kakkar

The vision behind the design for the hostel of Mann School centres around the importance of holistic facilities that would encourage learning at a home-away-from-home. In modern-day context, educational institutions and campuses have moved away from being bland, boring boxes to innovative and practical buildings, marked by an identity of institutional ethos and an intent to foster blended learning in an environment that would be welcoming and





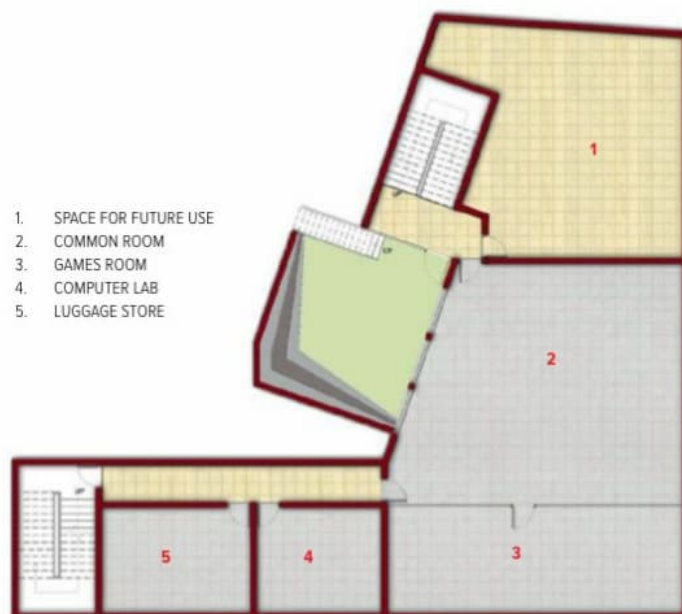


uplifting, both for students and staff.

The existing building housing all the girls was a makeshift hostel that did not cater to the programmatic and experiential nature of a hostel. Bearing in mind that the number of students had increased over time, Mann School demanded a new building that would be a safe and secure environment for the girls, while creating a multitude of public and private spaces for interaction. Considering that the girls are away from their homes in a co-educational school environment, it was crucial to make sure they are safe and secure at their accommodation. Further, the school also caters to students with special needs and anger management issues, and hence, every space needed to be planned accordingly. All allied facilities have therefore, been planned in a manner that they are in sync with the hostel, so that the security is not breached at any time.

The girls' hostel sits between two red-coloured buildings—namely the executive block and the senior wing with all the classrooms. The decision was taken to create a building that was muted and would not stand out with a false identity. Instead, carrying on with the legacy





**BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN**

of the school's ethos, openness and continuity would be brought in by the means of a garden. A neutral grey colour palette has been adopted in the building's façade, to match the typical tone of the Delhi sky. The grey also helps in lessening the effect of the red colour around. In order to

carry forward the same theme with the other two blocks, bricks have been used as a critical design element.

The school is characterised as an introverted building; once a user is inside the building, they can engage by looking inside the building







rather than outside, towards the multitude of recreational and other activities that take place within. Looking outside, one can see a garden, a field, and a few buildings. The different levels of the building are staggered to enable the occupants of each floor to instantly form a connection with everyone else, regardless of where they are positioned. Whether it is the study hall, salon, common room, parent lounge, table tennis area, or the garden—every individual within the space has a visual connection with the rest of the spaces.

To improve the well-being of the children, outdoor spaces as well as greenery have been prioritised. The metal *jaali* installed on the façade of the hostel building is supplemented by the lush greenery that extends up to the second floor. The creation of typical linear-shaped and straightforward corridors has been avoided since the fundamental purpose of designing the spaces of the building is to provide students with an area that facilitates interaction. All rooms open out to the corridor,



making it the very first place of communication. The corridors are tapered in a manner that they widen out at one end, where additional seating has been purposefully created in the resulting trapezoidal form.

The hostel block majorly comprises a dormitory, study hall, games room, television

1. TERRACE
2. COUTYARD BELOW
3. COMMON ROOM
4. BALCONY BELOW
5. CORRIDOR
6. 6 BEDDED ROOM
7. WASHROOMS
8. STORE ROOM
9. DRINK WATER
10. PANTRY
11. 4 BEDDED ROOM
12. TERRACE BELOW



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

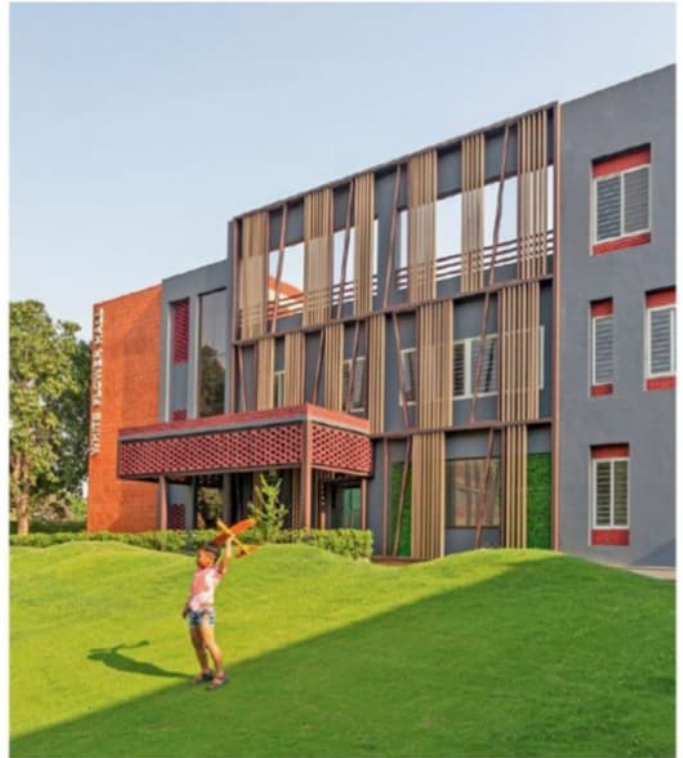


room, laundry room, computer room, storeroom, parent's lounge and room, guard station and salon. Conceptualised as a small institution within itself, the hostel is devised as a self-sufficient entity for the second half of the day. The design intent has been to ensure a lively and interactive environment where the girls do not feel isolated, and yet are kept away from mainstream activities while being under the framework of school regulations.

Every dormitory is occupied by four children. Bunk beds with sufficient storage are present on the ground floor. Each room is designed in a manner that accommodates four study tables and four wardrobes. Consequently, four windows have been deliberately designed to allow each child, especially on the upper level of the bunk bed, a view without making them feel claustrophobic and thereby, preventing children from being in the proximity of the ceiling and facing only a wall.

An 8-bedded dormitory on the ground floor with smaller-sized beds caters to students from the nursery, kindergarten and first standard. It is a narrow-shaped room, overlooking the garden that broadens out as one approaches the window. The study area is centered in the middle





of the room and is placed in between the beds on both sides of the dormitory, to make it easier for the tutor to sit and teach the students. Every floor of the hostel also has a pantry with water and food, available all through the night.

To provide students with areas to dry out their clothes, inward-looking terraces have been built. The intent of the tilted, cut-out shaped courtyard that extends from one end of the building to the other is to align it with the Northwest to Southeast wind direction of Delhi. Taking into account that birthdays, in particular, are a special occasion for the students, an amphitheatre has been created inside the courtyard to cater to the party needs. Designed as an extension of the common room, everyone in the school can participate in birthday parties and musical get-togethers, even while standing in the balconies or the corridors.

Driven by sustainability, all solar panels of each building are connected. Given that the site is a massive campus with many old trees, the doors of the hostel have been manufactured from 80 percent of the dead trees onsite. Other sustainable practices include two pits for rainwater harvesting, which are connected to collect rainwater from the 7,000 sq ft terrace.

All the site-excavated earth from the basement was used to level and create mounds in front of the girl's hostel. The debris that came out of the construction material were utilised to make the roads and footpaths of the school. Mud *phuska* was used for thermal insulation to reduce the ingress of heat by almost 70 percent. Bricks used onsite have been procured from local kilns to reduce the carbon footprint.

A home away from home, The Mann School, New Delhi follows a design approach that is empathetic towards the users, offering a safe environment with the freedom to interact, engage and get empowered. ✚

#### FACTFILE

**Client:** The Mann School

**Design team:** Meena Murthy Kakkar (Design Head and Partner), Vishal Kakkar (Business Head and Partner), Akanksha, Varun Seth, Pankaj Chawla, Payal Gupta  
Consultants: Structural & Civil - Pramod Kr Ojha; Electrical - Puneet Singh; Landscape and Plumbing - Envisage; HVAC - Dhiraj Chowdhary

**Contractors:** Structural & Civil - Prabhu Dayal

**Built area:** 3,000 sq m

**Year of completion:** 2020