



**Press Release  
June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016**

## **Greenbarnes helps school head send out clear message**

***The head of a primary school in Newport Pagnell has given its buildings and grounds a clear identity by overhauling jumbled signage and improving communications points. Peter Wain was helped in the project at Portfields Primary School by pupils, parents, staff and Northamptonshire company Greenbarnes, specialists in notice boards and signage.***

So often the signage of a school is a cocktail of mismatched and ill-considered elements – the product of years of piecemeal additions. An important opportunity to convey a cohesive message and a sense of school values to visitors is lost. Mr Wain recognised this and initiated the project to give the school a strong and clearly expressed identity.

Opened in April 1976 as Portfields Combined School, the site had been the subject to constant development, not least due to its proximity to the rapidly expanding new city of Milton Keynes. As is frequently the case, the school buildings had seen considerable organic growth over the years, in order to accommodate an evolving pattern of usage. One consequence of this was that the clarity of the original layout and pedestrian flows of the site had been lost. This manifested itself not only in the lack of a clearly defined route from the main gate to reception (confusing and off-putting to visitors) but also multiple entrances which, given the continuing emphasis on school security and safeguarding of young children, were now proving impractical.



In parallel to this lack of physical clarity, the unified nature of the original signage and indeed, more widely, the school's graphic identity used in day to day communications with parents and the outside world, had also lost focus.

In setting out to find a solution, it was clear that, for any scheme to have a lasting impact, the process needed to be inclusive and achieve a feeling of ownership amongst the wider school community. Accordingly pupils were invited to submit their own designs for a new school logo.

Although in the minds of many, Newport Pagnell will forever be linked with the eponymous service station, this Buckinghamshire market town has a long history. For many years it was the home of the sports car manufacturer Aston Martin whilst Tickford Bridge, which was built in 1810 and spans the River Ouse, is cited as the oldest iron bridge still in constant use. In the end it was Tickford Bridge which provided the source of inspiration for the winning design by year 4 student Scarlett Smith.

At this point good fortune smiled on the project in the form of parent and willing collaborator, Roze Sherwood of graphic designers Travisbead Ltd. Taking Scarlett's original design as a basis, Roze developed the new logo into a profession branding scheme to be applied not only across the whole school site, but also on its website and all communications.



Having worked with Greenbarnes on signage and notice board projects at two of his previous schools, Peter Wain had no hesitation in approaching the company again to assist in providing the final piece of the jigsaw as far as the signage was concerned. A site survey was undertaken to establish the school's requirements and a proposal was put together based on these findings using the new corporate identity.

A key requirement, identified at an early stage was that any signage should not only appear cohesive but should also exude an air of quality over and above that of the purely utilitarian signs which adorn so many schools. For this reason aluminium sign "trays" have been used throughout rather than cheaper but more workaday flat-plate alternatives.

For ease of maintenance, the material chosen was powder-coated aluminium and, in many instances, this was combined with digital print in order to faithfully reproduce the colours required by the new scheme. To emphasise the new logo to best effect, the main sign incorporates a fret-cut version mounted on stand-offs to achieve a 3D effect reminiscent of the cast iron frames of Tickford Bridge itself.

One of the major challenges in designing a suitable scheme was that of guiding those unfamiliar with the school's layout from the main gate to reception which, due to the evolution of the site is a journey of some 90 metres with no direct line of sight.

Previously, having been granted access via the intercom system, immediately upon passage through the main gate, a visitor's path was impeded by railings and a low earth bank forcing them to turn left. Thereafter the trail went cold. There were several possible doors, but all to classrooms rather than reception and no signs to indicate the correct direction. Now, visitors are met by a Parents' notice board, strategically placed to catch the attention of those waiting at the school gate and clear signage guiding the user along every step of the way to reception. A combination of methods including wall-mounted signs, finger posts and a trail of painted footprints is used.

Whilst undertaking the project, the opportunity has also been taken to further improve the dissemination of information by the inclusion of an external notice board for the use of each year group. Positioned at the class entrance doors and finished in the same dark blue as the signage, these provide space for teachers to keep the school community posted and what's happening in their year.

Poor signage within our schools is more common than we would like to think and perhaps, given the piecemeal nature their development, this isn't too surprising. However, it doesn't have to be this way. Portfields Primary School has demonstrated that, given a clear vision, a well executed plan and the right people involved, it is possible to produce a scheme which will not only deliver coherent signage now, but will also be capable of growth and adaption to meet future requirements.

## **Ends**

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