



# brighton rocks

Even though we were on our way to Brighton, it was Chicago that came to mind. Obviously well prepared for a case study visit, we had checked out Study Group's website – and it was the expression 'world class' that kept rattling around in one's brain.

Regular Chicago trips bring to mind the world class surf 'n' turf restaurants, the world class White Sox, the world class Shedd aquarium...you get the picture.

So we struggled through the world class snowstorm (ok, it was only a few flakes) and entered Study Group's new Brighton Study Centre. And you know what...it is world class.

Visibly proud, and so she should be, Tina Whitfield welcomed us into the impressive atrium and proceeded to explain the thinking behind what is a new benchmark in educational facilities. Tina's card says Property and Central Services Director and she's too self-effacing and charming to contemplate admitting it, but her passion, determination and attention to detail have been key elements in the delivery of the Brighton Study Centre.▶▶▶







▶▶▶▶ big building, but its design is such that you don't feel insignificant – and I think that's been created by the many breakout areas, which create a sense of cosiness away from the bustle.

'This theme of informal breakout areas is carried through in the administrative areas. These are open plan, housing 12 different departments, and we made a conscious decision to have as few meeting rooms as possible, but to maximise the number of informal areas. Clearly, this was to improve internal communication – and I have to say it works really well. There's now much more integration between staff and students, which has had a significant cultural impact.'

Our tour of the building, designed by Winchester based architects Architecture PLB, reveals that it is organised into specialist teaching to the east, shared teaching and administration to the west, with the clusters of residential and refectory to the north around landscaped courtyards. Extensive use was made of the BRE Green specification guide for selection of materials, fed into a green procurement strategy. This of course supports the building's low energy model incorporating elements such as the cementitious sheathing

board to assist energy conservation, and the highly insulated external walls.

Continuing this green theme – the local authority set a BREEAM target rating of 'very good' – Architecture PLB and Plincke Landscape worked closely with the ecologist from BHCC, who advocated greening of the scheme through a series of green walls, treed courtyards and green roofs. The species were selected for their ability to encourage various insects and invertebrates which then in turn feed the indigenous birds. A mix of bark (peeling from trees), wall climbers and green roofs provide a wide range of habitats, which link together along the 150m site to provide an ecological 'High Street' to link to a site of nature conservation interest to the north and further urban greening to the south. The result is a sustainable set of habitats rather than isolated islands of planning.

As one might expect for an enterprise with high educational standards, the building is furnished to a premium level. High specification science labs, the student internet suite, study bedrooms, the library and the open plan offices are all furnished to an exemplary quality level. Tina explains the process: 'We've had a good relationship

with Interoffice since they completely furnished our Greenwich facility five years ago. They did an excellent job, but beyond the level of competence one expects. I find that any issues are dealt with just as soon as I call. They're very personable and helpful. We used Interoffice because one point of contact for the myriad of items is very important to us – from workstations to ▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶



## case study



►► storage to whiteboards, mattresses and table lamps. Their strength in logistics is a big plus on a six week fit out – and the furniture turned up on the day Interoffice said it would.

‘For specification, every piece was looked at by a team, led by me with some clear ideas about what was required. My former colleague Liz Webb is very strong on design and colour and I picked up on her ideas. We’ve been strong on detail – like the cafeteria tables having no crevices to make the cleaning easier, and our choice of IVM workstations. It’s a brilliant bench system, great for space saving in its groups of up to eight stations. It’s got good leg room and is strong on wire management too. We also chose IVM because it’s easy to break down into smaller groups when we need to. The choice of Silverline storage was also critical because filing is a very important issue for us. We used Silverline’s m:line system extensively, partially because the side tambours are neat and tidy but also so that we could demarcate offices and use the units as walls. We actually talked to our staff a good deal about storage, and conducted a fairly exhaustive filing audit because we store so many different types of media – some of which had to be archived or scanned. Some of our teachers have got over 30 years of paper...!’

We often visit outstandingly interesting buildings, with high levels of design detail and, increasingly, impressive green credentials. But Study Group stands out in so many ways that make it a particularly fascinating case study. World class indeed! ●



## essential ingredients

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|--------------------------|---|
| Client:                  | • Study Group   |
| Design & Planning:       | • Architecture PLB<br>01962 842200<br>Plincke Landscape<br>01962 842828 |
| Furniture Provision:     | • Interoffice<br>020 7831 6678  |
| Systems Furniture:       | • IVM<br><a href="http://www.ivmoffice.it">www.ivmoffice.it</a>         |
| Seating:                 | • Throna<br><a href="http://www.throna.com">www.throna.com</a>          |
| Breakout Furniture:      | • Kastel<br>+039 0438 401 380   |
| Internet Café Furniture: | • Archiutti<br>020 7831 6678  |
| Storage:                 | • Silverline<br>01638 715006  |