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St Joseph's Catholic School

New SEND Building

 **Client:** St Joseph's Catholic School

 **Sector:** Education

 **Location:** Slough, Berkshire

The Brief

The requirement for a new SEND facility at St Joseph's Catholic High School came through Ingleton Wood: Building Design & Construction services. The Trust sought a purpose-built modular solution to expand provision for pupils with additional educational needs.


The project brief called for a single-storey block of approximately 150m², incorporating a large classroom/conference room, intervention spaces, staff office, kitchen, and fully compliant sanitary facilities. The building needed to provide a safe, durable, and fully accessible environment while integrating with the existing school site.


Elite Systems was appointed to deliver a turnkey modular solution, ensuring high-quality design, off-site manufacture, and rapid installation with minimal disruption to the live school environment.

 **Project:** New SEND Building

 **Location:** Slough, Berkshire

 **Project Cost:** £473,768.47

 **Timeline:** The project was successfully delivered in just 9 weeks on site, from initial setup through to final handover

 **Key Features:** Timber cladding, inclusive classrooms, intervention rooms, specialist WC, secure external play area, permeable landscaping, high insulation values, 60-year design life

The Main Features

Outside

- ✓ **Contemporary Timber Cladding –** Thermally modified spruce panels create a warm, modern façade that blends seamlessly with surrounding school buildings.
- ✓ **Robust Roofing System –** Insulated EPDM flat roof achieves 0.16W/m²K, combining weatherproofing with long-term performance and low maintenance requirements.
- ✓ **Secure Fencing & Gates –** 1.8m-high close-boarded timber fencing and access-controlled gates enclose the building, providing security and safeguarding for pupils.
- ✓ **Permeable Hard Landscaping –** Sustainable paving allows for effective drainage, creating safe, level access routes around entrances and outdoor circulation areas.
- ✓ **Energy-Efficient Windows –** Aluminium-framed double-glazed casements in RAL 7016 ensure natural light, thermal performance, and robust, low-maintenance operation.
- ✓ **Integrated External Lighting –** Bulkhead fixtures provide safe illumination for entry points, ensuring visibility and compliance with external M&E specifications.



Inside

- ✓ **Flexible Conference Classroom –** A 68m² multi-use teaching and meeting space, equipped with interactive technology and adaptable layouts for diverse group activities.
- ✓ **Targeted Intervention Rooms –** Two specialist spaces (12–21m²) for focused teaching and therapy, designed to be calming, private, and acoustically resilient.
- ✓ **Inclusive Staff Facilities –** Shared office and kitchen provide work and rest space for staff supporting SEND pupils, meeting workplace regulations.
- ✓ **Accessible Sanitary Provision –** Fully Part M-compliant WC, with grab rails, anti-slip vinyl flooring, and robust finishes designed for safety and hygiene.
- ✓ **Corridor Circulation Spine –** Central corridor links all rooms, ensuring logical flow, safe movement, and clear visibility for supervision across the building.
- ✓ **Durable Internal Finishes –** Fire-rated partitions, acoustic insulation, and easy-clean surfaces combine safety, functionality, and resilience against daily intensive use.



Challenges

The project presented numerous challenges, which we addressed with determination and creativity. Some of the key obstacles included:



Design Life & Durability

The Trust required a 60-year design life with a 25-year warranty. This demanded robust materials, such as thermally modified timber cladding, fire-rated internal partitions, and durable finishes. Each component had to be factory-tested and specified to meet high levels of wear and tear, ensuring minimal maintenance costs across the building's lifespan.



Sustainability Standards

The specification emphasised long-term sustainability, with U-values of 0.16–0.26 W/m²K and airtight construction. Achieving this performance within modular constraints required close collaboration between design and factory teams. Ensuring compliance with current Building Regulations and the Trust's environmental expectations demanded continuous monitoring of thermal bridging, insulation layers, and airtightness testing.



Live School Site Management

The SEND block was installed within a functioning secondary school. Deliveries, craning, and installation had to be scheduled outside peak pupil movement times. Noise and dust control measures reduced disruption to lessons. Clear signage, fencing, and supervised access points ensured safety for staff, students, and contractors throughout the construction phase.



Ensuring Accessibility

Meeting and exceeding Part M requirements meant carefully coordinating door widths, corridor clearances, and level thresholds. Specialist sanitary provision demanded adjustable fittings, grab rails, and sufficient turning circles. The modular design required precision to ensure accessibility standards were fully integrated into each bay without compromising the manufacturing process or internal spatial efficiency.



Compact Site Constraints

Limited site area required efficient layout planning, with fencing, landscaping, and drainage coordinated tightly around the block. New permeable surfaces and play space had to be integrated while maintaining safe circulation and emergency access routes. Precision setting-out was essential to avoid clashes with existing services and infrastructure while meeting planning requirements.



Coordination of M&E

The integration of mechanical and electrical services, including heating, ventilation, access control, and lighting, presented challenges. Ceiling voids were designed to incorporate distribution without compromising acoustic performance or ceiling heights. External condensers were securely enclosed, and ducting routes carefully planned to avoid clashes with structural or architectural elements.



SEND-Specific Design

The building's plan was carefully configured to suit a broad spectrum of SEND requirements, ensuring both practicality and a positive learning atmosphere. Wide corridors and flush thresholds provide smooth, unobstructed circulation for wheelchair users and mobility aids, while accessible sanitary facilities are centrally located to support dignity and ease of use.

Acoustic wall linings and suspended ceilings reduce background noise, creating calmer classrooms that are less overwhelming for pupils with sensory sensitivities. Classrooms are designed to balance robust functionality with a welcoming, student-friendly environment, supporting both group learning and individual support sessions.



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I remember stepping into an Elite Systems building, it stood out from all the others in terms of specification and overall appearance.

I would highly recommend Elite to any school. The specification of this building is absolutely outstanding. Any concerns you might have regarding safeguarding, DBS checks, or the conduct of workers on site, Elite were impeccable. They truly listened to our needs.

They kept completely within their own compound and even brought their own welfare facilities with them. You wouldn't have known they were here, they were absolutely incredible.

-Kelly Riddle, Headteacher at St Josephs Catholic School

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The Results

Purpose-Built Provision, Practical Performance

The completed SEND block at St Joseph's Catholic High School delivers a **modern, durable, and inclusive facility** that directly addresses the Trust's vision for enhanced SEND provision. Internally, pupils benefit from a large flexible classroom, smaller therapeutic spaces, and accessible sanitary provision. Wide corridors and robust finishes ensure safe circulation and long-term resilience. For staff, new office and kitchen spaces provide practical support facilities, while the internal layout allows for efficient supervision and flexible teaching methods.

Externally, thermally modified timber cladding offers a contemporary, low-maintenance finish that integrates with the wider school estate. Secure fencing and permeable paving provide safety and weather resilience, while energy-efficient windows ensure natural light and comfort. The building demonstrates the benefits of modular construction: rapid delivery, quality-controlled manufacturing, and reduced on-site disruption. Designed with a **60-year life expectancy**, it is a sustainable investment for the Trust, balancing upfront efficiency with long-term performance.

Overall, the SEND block represents a **safe, sustainable, and future-proofed facility** that will support inclusive education, enhance staff capability, and serve as a long-term asset to the school community.