

Inside Outside

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**Outstanding – Bharti's One Airtel Centre,
Gurugram!**



Notice the raised level onto which the school buses come all the way upto where the children queue up and board. Basketball, anyone?



The enclosed area where the tiny tots gather before entering their designated buses to go home.



The Right School?

Designing a school cannot be easy. Compared to a family home, or a restaurant, that is. Take a day trip through this school and figure out how it compares with the schools of yore, or better still, to the one you attended as a student!

TEXT: ARTHY MUTHANNA SINGH
PHOTOGRAPHS: SWORK STUDIO AND NARENDRA SHARMA



Reception desk, for all the help, queries and information about the school.

When parents go scouting for a school to put their precious child into, what would they looking for today? Word of mouth, counts for a lot. Reputation does too. Then, it should be contemporary, right? State-of-the-art, right? Child-friendly... cheerful... world class... extra-safe...

Parents, vendors and collaborators have a cool, chic place to wait for their appointments!

So GD Goenka School at Sarita Vihar in Delhi had just the right architect on their new project – award-winning architect Goonmeet Singh Chauhan of DFI (Design Forum International) based in Delhi, ready to bring in a refreshing 'newness' to the table. He believes that architects must go beyond the stated brief and use their imagination to create habi-

tats that ensure experiential joy, while also being a visual delight. Perfect vision for a primary school, right?

When schools all over the world are striving to ensure that their campuses are designed to facilitate the engagement of the young minds by creating interactive environments that are a blend of study, activity and play areas, the GD Goenka group's philosophy fitted right into that slot. They kept the brief as simple and concise as possible. Basically they would be doing away with the traditional methods of teaching which involved black-boards. In this day and age, it is considered to be somewhat archaic. The school would need to reflect and facilitate the new aids that schools all over the world use. They

wanted highly flexible classrooms that could morph into whatever the teacher needed it for, with multimedia tools such as projectors to keep the children engaged and receptive. Moreover, they wanted adequate storage space for the children to stack their bags and books.

The expectation was that the classrooms had to be highly flexible to support a variety of formal and informal teaching methods. The design of the institutional development of a primary school (from kindergarten to class 5) enables these requirements while aiming to provide flexibility of spaces by making the building form itself as a part of the learning experience.

Since the one-acre site for the construction of the school happened to be on a fairly



Reception area, tastefully designed.





When parents go scouting for a school
to put their precious child into,
what would they look for?
It should be...





For dance classes, gym or just play...



Sa-re-ga-ma...or Do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti?
Music galore!



Goonmeet Chauhan



View from the top of the stairs; going down, down...

FACT FILE

TYPOLGY

Institutional

NAME OF PROJECT

GD Goenka

LOCATION

Sarita Vihar, New Delhi

PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT

Goonmeet Chauhan

DESIGN TEAM

Anil, Yogesh, Vikas Sharma,
Nishant

SITE AREA

43615.78 sq ft

BUILT-UP AREA

38112.31 sq ft

START DATE

September 2013

COMPLETION DATE

March 2015

CONSULTANTS

STRUCTURAL

NNC Design International

MECHANICAL

V S Kukreja & Associates

ELECTRICAL

V S Kukreja & Associates

HVAC

V S Kukreja & Associates

PLUMBING

V S Kukreja & Associates

PRODUCTS/VENDORS

AIR-CONDITIONING

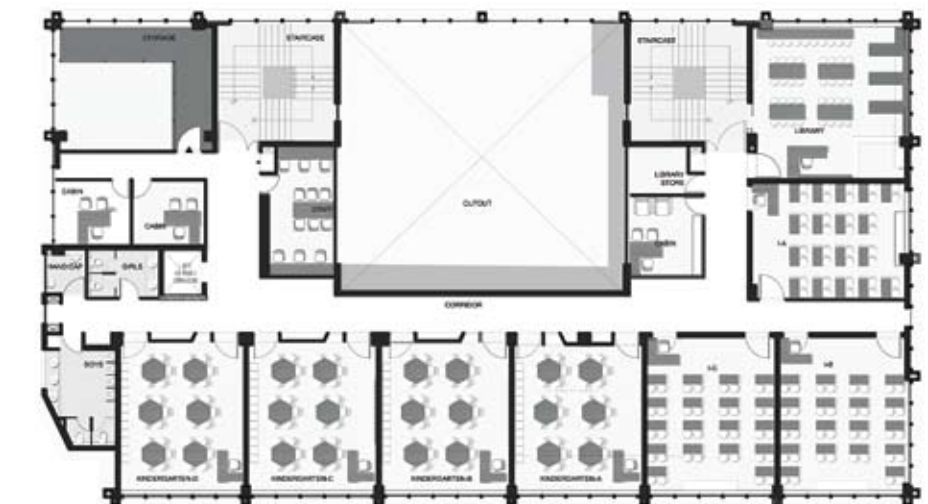
Apex HVAC Services Pvt Ltd

ELEVATOR

Schindler India Pvt Ltd



Upper-Ground Floor Plan



First Floor Plan



Principal's office. Separate nook to meet parents; shelves for awards that the children and school win.



Board room for, well... board meetings! Also, for departmental heads to meet.

busy road, the architectural team decided it would be best to enable entry of the 14 buses of the school into the campus. This meant that the children would then be able to embark and disembark from their designated buses within the safety of their school campus, instead of on the busy road outside. The presence of the busy road also meant that the building needed to be sound-proof and completely air-conditioned as well.

Half an acre of the total site area was earmarked for sports facilities, and the remaining half accommodates the academic facilities and a parking area for the 14 in-house school buses. The entire built volume is lifted up on stilts and the setback area is used to park the buses in straight files. The primary wing comprises the adminis-

tration section, all the classrooms, the music and dance studios along with other service areas.

A simple C-shaped plan was devised that allowed for the development of a modular string of well-ventilated, glare-free classrooms, each 6m x 7m. Keeping the safety of children in mind, two, 2m-wide fire escape staircases are provided in the corners. The classrooms are situated along the periphery of the C and that created a central cavity. A vital link between the interior and exterior is created by establishing a visual link through this central atrium space. By doing away with the formality and rigidity of the usual double-loaded corridors in schools, a single-loaded version was adopted instead, thereby giving a feeling of openness. Visions of

happy children milling around automatically come to mind.

With an eye for detail, an RO system is provided in the corners to provide the children with safe drinking water and the toilets are designed for universal accessibility. An entire floor at the top is for co-curricular activities along with two libraries, two music rooms and two dance rooms.

The central zone is designed to be used for multiple activities for young children and is hence enclosed by a four-floor high screen and has a rubberized floor to be used for gymnastics and other indoor sports. At the lower level, there is a large column-free space fashioned for performances that allow for a gathering of 150- 200 people with space for a large stage and free spaces on the sides.



Bright classroom, with interesting, quirky elements that little kids would appreciate!

Read as much as you can. A well-stocked library; an absolute must!

State-of-the-art computer lab.



Cheery, bright classroom for the older classes.

institutional



Half the area of the school plot has been dedicated to sports and play.

The sports area is designed in such a manner that the central internal atrium is joined with the external performance arena to allow for an event for the entire school, whilst also allowing space for a large athletic track. Within the sports facility, a small football field, a swimming pool, a volleyball court and a basketball court have been all incorporated. A paved landscape is planned at the periphery; where all through, one-metre wide green planters are hewed in.

The interior colour palette comprises of playful primary colours juxtaposed cleverly with biscuit coloured brick walls. A yellow accent band that runs horizontally in the

corridor further enlivens the spaces within. The doors are designed with circular cut-outs at the height of a child, allowing the tots to peak in.

Traditional materials like Dholpur and Agra stone have been juxtaposed with transient materials like aluminum and heat-insulated glass. Aiming to establish an external visual character unlike that of a traditional primary school, and more in sync with the vibrant colours of Delhi, the typical bricks have been done away with in favour of the local Dholpur stone and Agra stone, with olive-green metal for the electricity poles and the gate. The exterior composi-

tion of the school is hence monastic in its character and seen as a three-level composition with a heavy stone base made out of Dholpur stone. This was topped with a rectangular colonnade of Agra stone columns that envelope all four sides and eventually get crowned with a hovering cantilevered plane. As a result, this composition symbolically represents the all-encompassing canopy of a banyan tree, a safe, calm haven for learning and enlightenment. Was this Goonmeet's intention from the moment he took on this project? Time will tell. And, the looks on the happy primary children, maybe? 