



The Barony Campus, Cumnock, East Ayrshire UK

Flexible Learning Case Study



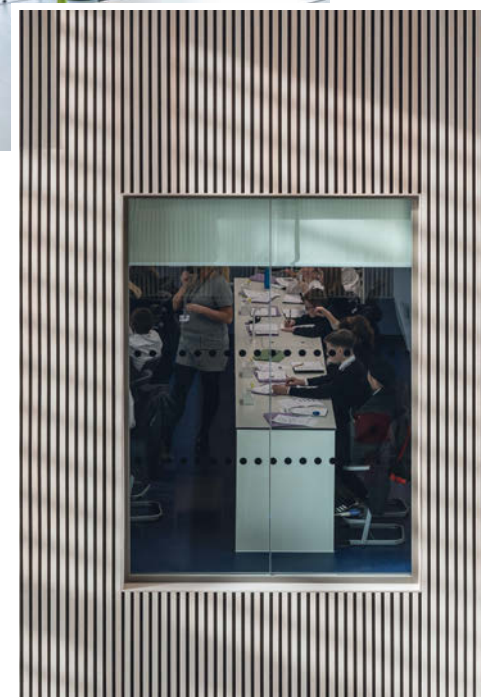
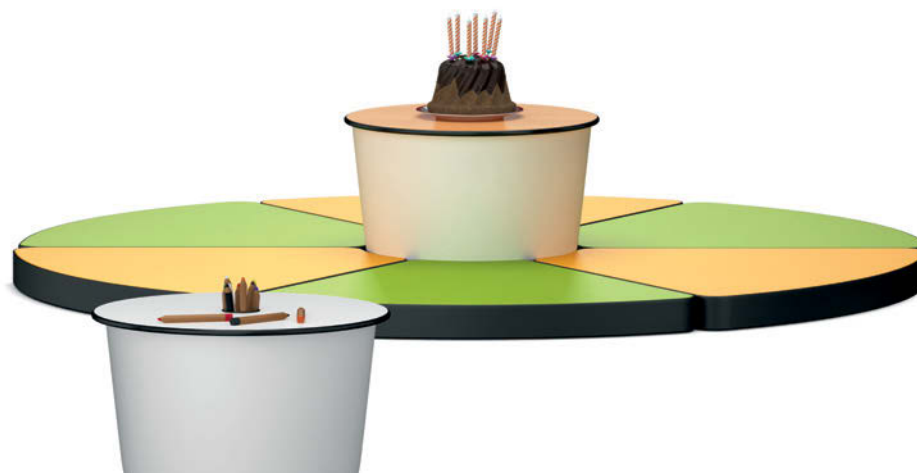


The School.

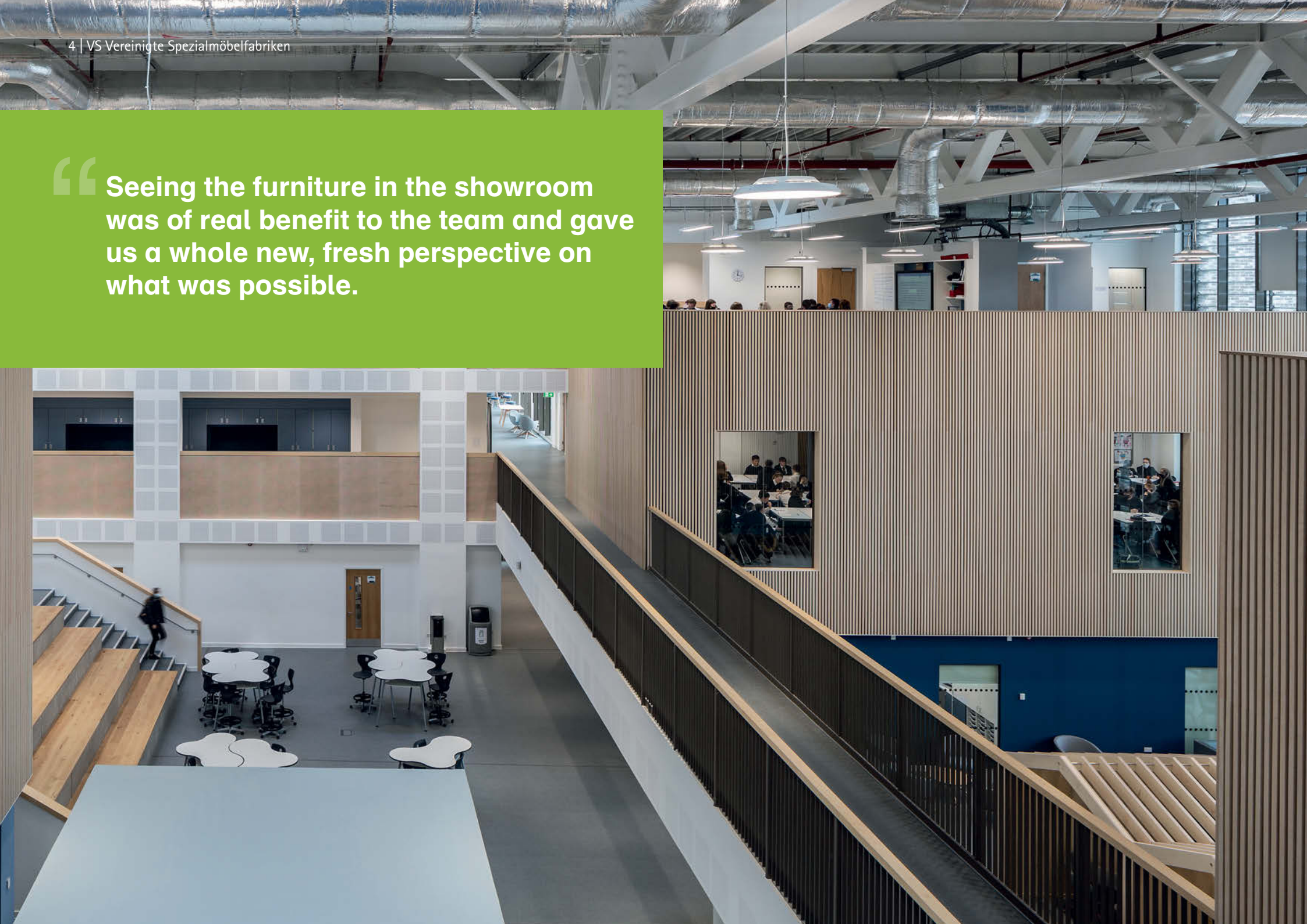
The Barony Campus – a new centre of learning.

Barony Campus in Cumnock, East Ayrshire, is situated on a 19.8 hectare, urban fringe site, consolidating five separate schools into one – creating a new centre of learning for Cumnock, Auchinleck and the surrounding areas. The campus accommodates 2,500 students and 300 staff, which includes a secondary school for 1,633 pupils, a primary school for 517 pupils and an Early Childhood Centre, providing 1140 hours of early learning and childcare to approximately 120 children. It also includes an 80-place supported learning centre, plus 30 additional places for students with additional support needs (ASN).

The Barony Campus is the biggest capital project ever undertaken by East Ayrshire Council, with costs in the region of £68m. VS furniture solutions were incorporated throughout the school to compliment the state-of-the-art facilities and meet the educational aspirations of the council – resulting in an inclusive, innovative and flexible learning environment.



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Q&A.

With East Ayrshire Council Educational Architecture & Asset Planning Team, Aileen Hollywood, Helen Donnelly & Anne Richardson.

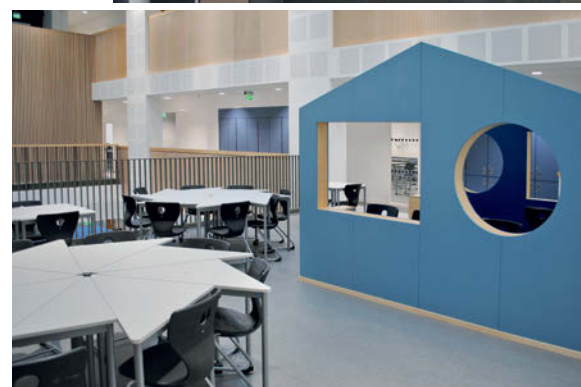
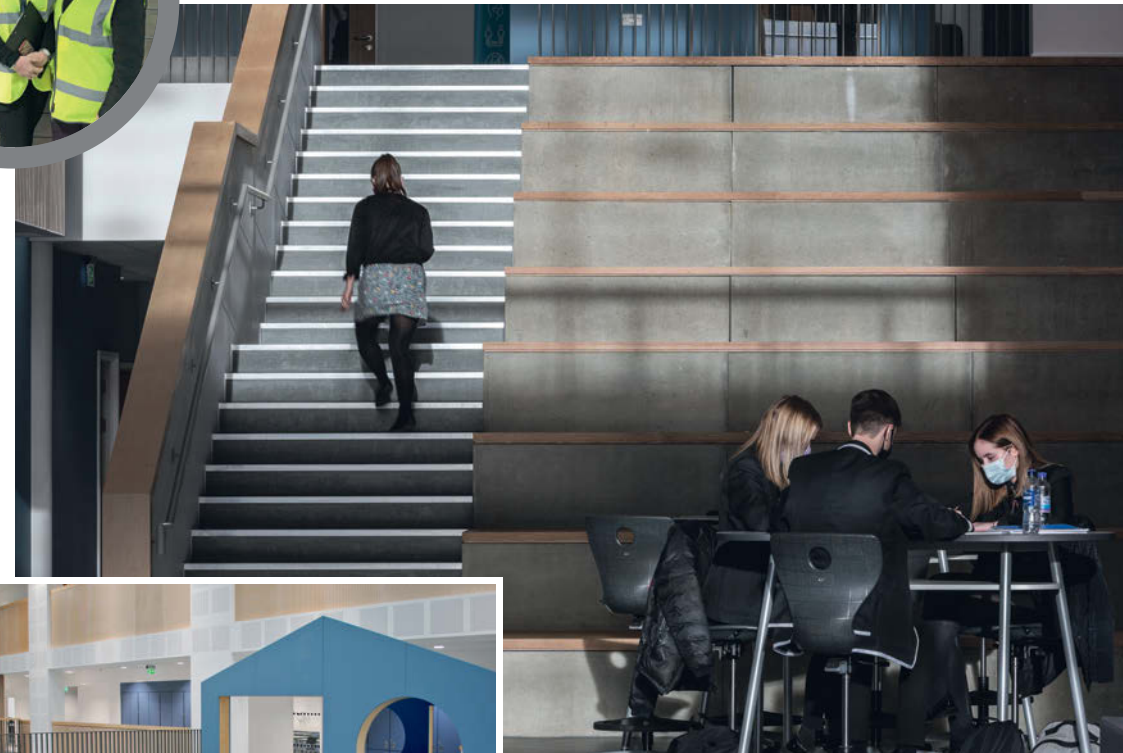
Thank you for choosing VS furniture for the Barony Campus project. Can you explain what first lead you to consider VS?

VS was initially proposed by Sheppard Robson, who were the architects for the project. Whilst we loved the furniture, we did initially think that it might be too expensive for the budget. Throughout this project, we developed a close working relationship with the supplier of the majority of our furniture, Sharp Business Systems UK PLC. We realised we would be able to provide best value for the council in the long term if we initially invested more. The tender price demonstrated that we made the right decision.

Our visit to the VS factory, facilitated by the furniture supplier, resulted in additional items being purchased. Seeing the furniture in the showroom was of real benefit to the team and gave us a whole new, fresh perspective on what was possible. Subsequently, we ordered a number of items that hadn't previously been considered, which has been very well received by both staff and pupils. Also, setting up a mock sample classroom with VS flexible furniture, prior to completing the full tender, was of great value. End users were able to visualise how classrooms would look and experience how flexible the furniture could be in day-to-day use.

VS produce educational furniture focused on creating more flexible learning opportunities within schools. Was flexible learning an important part of your overall agenda when considering furniture?

Most definitely. Curriculum for Excellence (Scotland) demands a more flexible approach to education by providing opportunities for learners to be more independent and take greater responsibility for their own learning. Many children and young people struggle with more traditional methods of teaching and learning, so ensuring we had the right furniture to facilitate this changing approach was key. The campus also includes an Additional Support Needs (ASN) school, so VS furniture really helped us create a particularly innovative, highly flexible ASN learning space.





VS furniture has been designed with a strong focus on ergonomics and practicality. Were these also important considerations?

Yes. There is a far greater emphasis on ergonomics and ensuring educational environments contribute in a positive way to the health and wellbeing of all staff and pupils. Design features such as table hangers for dining chairs are also a major asset for cleaning staff. This not only saves time, but ensures an efficient and effective cleaning regime. This has become even more important in current times dealing with the challenges of Covid.

Regarding build quality and longevity, VS furniture ranks significantly higher than most competitive products available. In your experience, would you agree with this?

Certainly from previous experience in our PPP schools, most of which were completed over a decade ago, the longevity of the products demonstrated best value for the council.

VS prefer to focus on developing solutions-based, rather than price-based product ranges. Was price a significant factor when selecting educational furniture?

Yes, in terms of the budget available for furniture – which was non-negotiable. This particular project was our most ambitious to date and the significant budget allocated allowed us to take advantage of competitive discounting by VS, due to the sheer volume of the order.

Can you tell us how the furniture has been initially received, both by the teachers and students?

General feedback has been good on the whole, albeit with some end users (mainly staff) taking a bit of time to get used to the style and ergonomic functionality of the chairs. One thing is for certain, gone are the days when pupils always sit at rows of desks, facing the front, listening to the teacher. This approach still has its place, but new opportunities for pupils to engage in collaborative, peer-group and independent learning are also required.

Would you consider using VS again for any future projects?

During these uncertain times, securing sufficient budgets for high quality furniture may prove more challenging. However, VS furniture would definitely be the first choice for our team, based on positive experiences to date.

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Q&A.

With Furniture Dealer Sharp Business Systems Account Managers Margaret Anderson & John McCall.

VS take great pride in offering unique furniture solutions that differentiate us from the competition. Was this a major factor when selecting the furniture, both for you and your client?

It was very important for both Sharp and the client to incorporate high quality, ergonomic products, combined with a unique aesthetic – especially being a new, large-scale flagship school project. Sharp knew VS could fulfil this criteria and have the capability to deliver.

What is your overall impression regarding the quality of VS furniture, compared to competitive alternatives in your portfolio?

This is the second large-scale project in which Sharp has used VS, the first being Jedburgh Grammar Campus. We're pleased to say we are highly impressed with the quality of the products and service (as we were with Jedburgh), combined with the comfort and flexibility VS furniture provides.

In your own words, what would you say are the unique selling points of VS furniture that directly appealed to you and your client for the Barony Campus project?

When we started negotiations with our client, it became clear they wanted a range of furniture that not only looked good, but would suit their learning agenda and environment. The main criteria was that it had to be flexible, easily moved and comfortable. Our client also required a combination of quality and value for money, so we knew VS products struck the right balance.

What was your overall impression regarding the service from VS over the duration of the project – given the obvious challenges during the pandemic?

VS provided a fantastic service throughout. When you're working on a project this size, it's important a supplier provides specific delivery dates and times they can actually adhere to, in order for the project to run smoothly. We were given regular



updates exactly when the shipment would arrive down to the exact hour! This made it very easy for us to plan a highly efficient instalment schedule, despite the pandemic.

What is your impression of the existing VS marketing material and do you feel it could be improved in any way?

We found the marketing materials to be very good. We were also fortunate enough to take our client over to the showroom in Germany. This was an excellent PR opportunity, where the client could see and interact with a wider range of furniture first-hand, plus experience the sheer scale and capability of the manufacturing plant. Several unique products the client hadn't previously envisaged were also added to the wish-list, so it proved to be a very fruitful trip.

Would you also advocate VS furniture for future projects and recommend it to new clients?

Sharp would have no hesitation in recommending VS again, in fact, we have several pipeline projects where we have already specified VS products.



“ The Barony Campus is seen as a flagship project for the council, so the furniture selection had to reflect this. The ambition was for furniture to activate the internal spaces by turning them into exciting learning environments.



Q&A.

With Sheppard Robson architect Ryan McMonagle.

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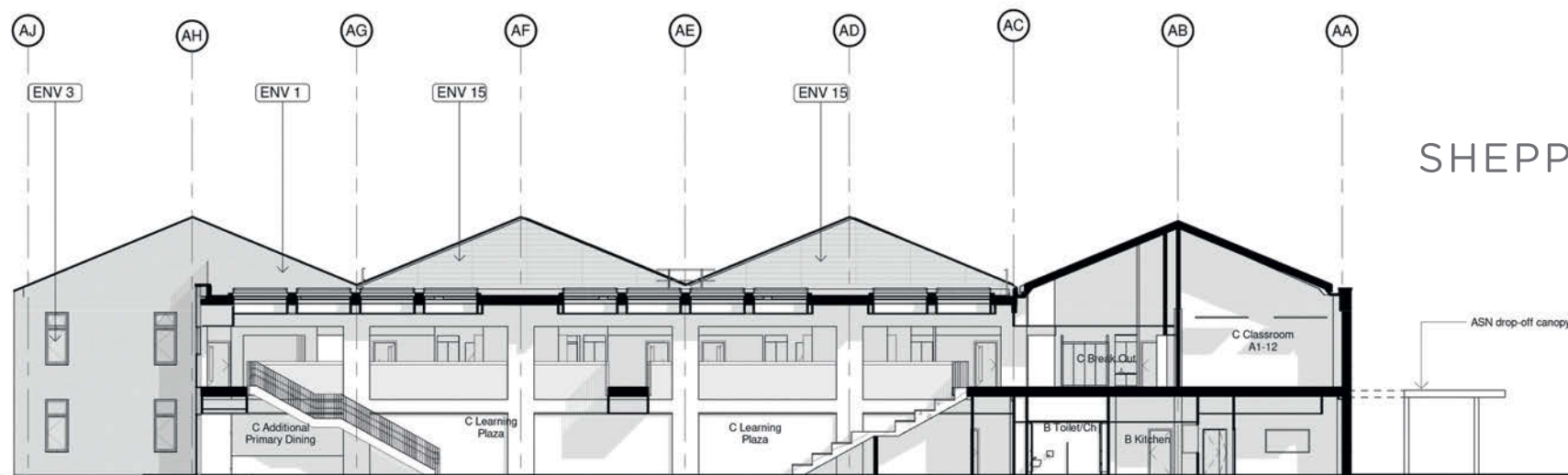
From the offset, we worked very closely with the East Ayrshire team to establish the principles of the campus, holding a number of consultations regarding their experience with furniture in other schools. The Barony Campus is seen as a flagship project for the council, so the furniture selection had to reflect this.

The ambition was for furniture to activate the internal spaces by turning them into exciting learning environments – whilst also providing high quality, durable solutions. We have engaged with VS in the past and knew from experience the high-quality furniture ranges would be ideal for the campus. When we proposed VS to the East Ayrshire team and acquired samples for them to test, they responded positively that it was the right choice to proceed with.



In your own words, what would you say are the unique selling points of VS furniture that directly appealed to you and your client for the Barony Campus project?

Through our experience working within the education sector, we understand that the 'classroom teaching' model has evolved. At Barony Campus, there are various forms of teaching and studying outside the classroom itself. Break-out areas become potential learning spaces, as well as other areas shared by both students and staff throughout the campus. These highly flexible spaces are referred to as 'learning plazas' and include dynamic, modular furniture solutions from VS designed to provide multiple configurational options.



SHEPPARD ROBSON

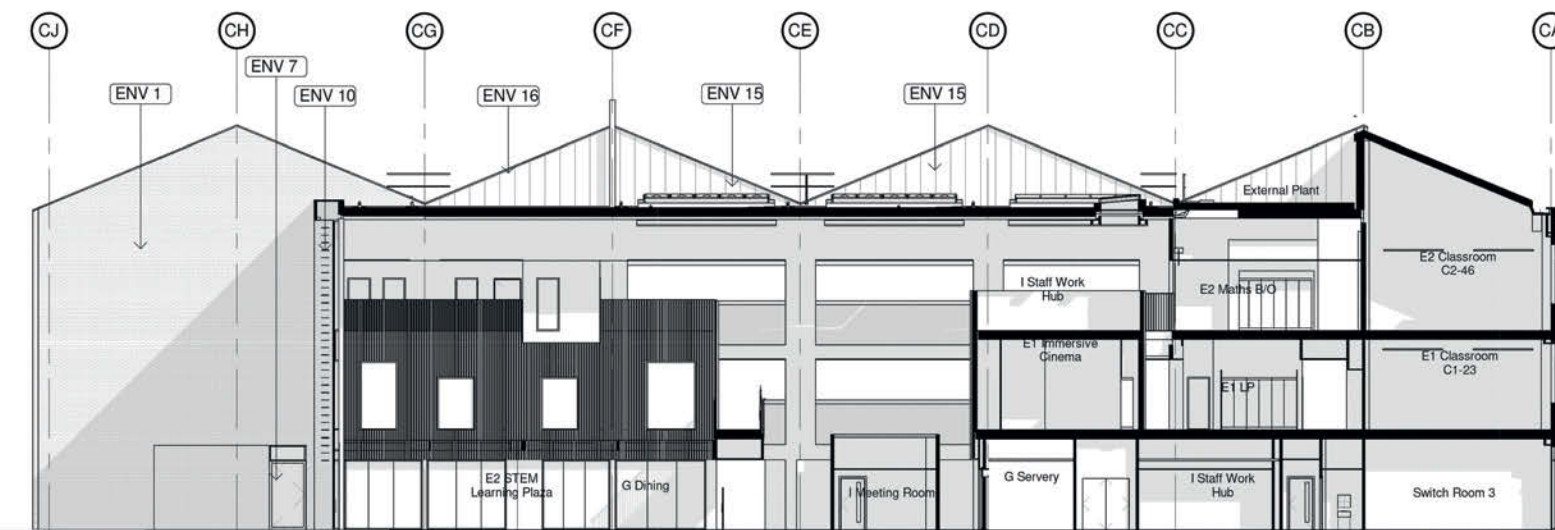
What was your overall impression regarding the service from VS over the duration of the project – given the obvious challenges during the pandemic?

From the offset, the exacting furniture proposals for the campus meant selections had to be flexible enough to achieve the design brief, but also meet high-quality build specifications. The end-users also had some input to ensure furniture was appropriate for each user group, so the development of the furniture package was an important process. It was a mammoth task for such a large project!

VS were always available and consistent from the start of the design phase, right through to tender and construction. Their industry knowledge and quick responses proved beneficial throughout the project, whether it be suggesting alternative furniture solutions, or providing the client with key information. It was evident from the beginning that VS fully understood the ambitions of the project, showing great care and diligence. The successful collaboration left no doubt we would achieve the right results for the campus regarding furniture.

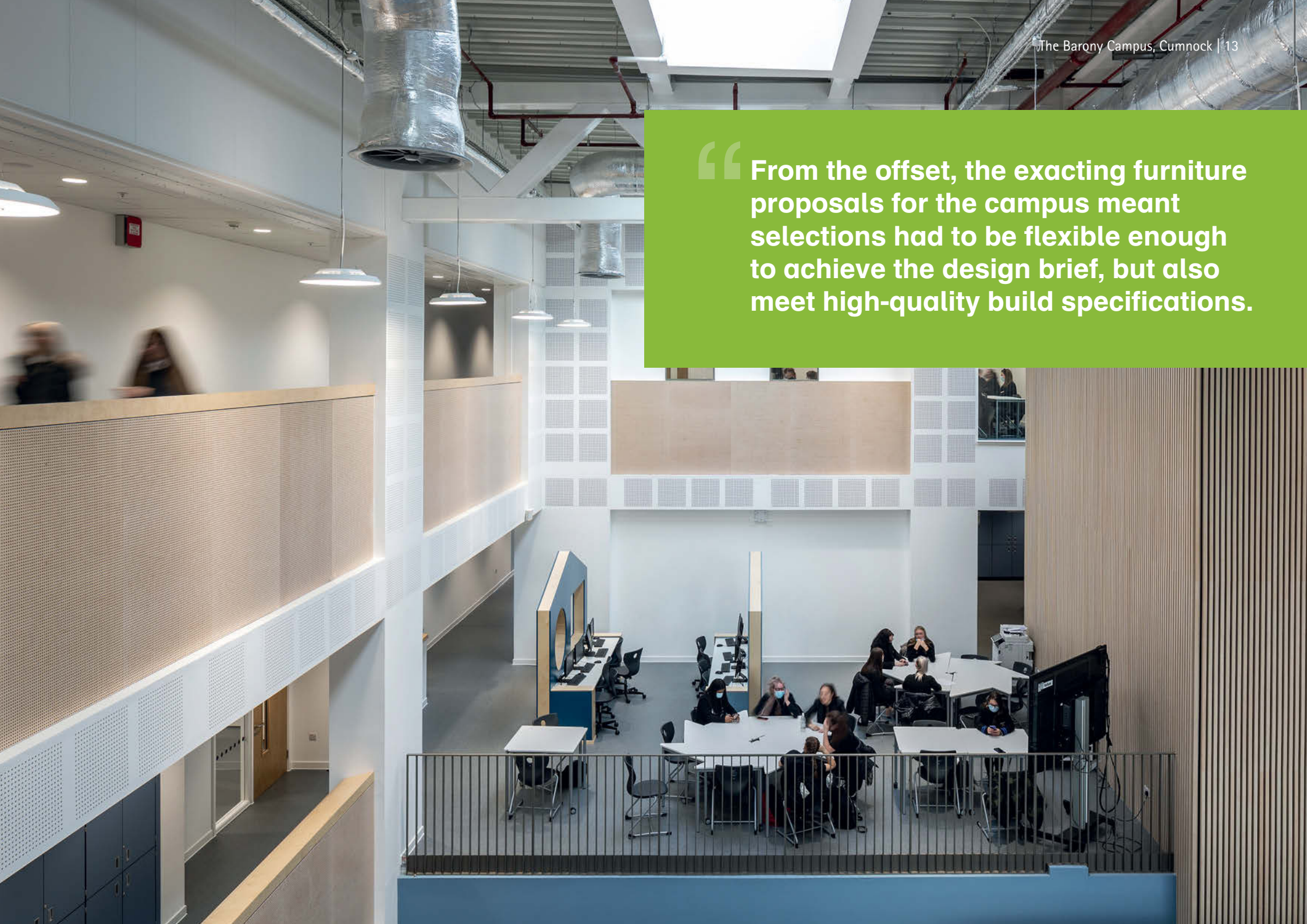
Would you also advocate VS furniture for future projects and recommend it to new clients?

Feedback from the client suggests the various users groups are extremely happy with the furniture at Barony Campus. Seeing for ourselves how the furniture has exceeded the expectations of the brief, we would most certainly advocate them for future projects. It was an enjoyable experience working with the VS team and we have no hesitations recommending them to our clients.



SHEPPARD ROBSON

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The Furniture.

VS - our flexible learning focus.

Creating a flexible learning environment. What does that actually mean?

Firstly, it's important to challenge conventional thought on what a learning environment is, or should be. Traditionally, classrooms with uniform rows of desks, facing the teacher out front, has been the accepted format for many decades. It is a very 'one-dimensional' approach to teaching - effective for some, but not for others. The reality is, we all absorb information and learn in very different ways.

Some like to study in groups, some prefer solitude. Some learners like theory and abstract concepts, whilst others prefer a practical, hands-on approach. Some like to read, some prefer more visual media. There are a whole variety of learner needs that must be met in order for each individual student to benefit equally from education. Recognising how our bodies and minds work in harmony with the environment is vital to achieving this.

Our Shift+ range of educational furniture opens up real learning opportunities. It is designed to fully support modern teaching and learning practices, as stipulated by the curriculum. Studies show that static, inflexible educational furniture often imposes severe restrictions on teachers and learners alike - inhibiting successful academic results.

At VS, our focus is to provide multiple options to change classroom furniture layout quickly and efficiently - allowing the varied teaching methods and unique learning styles to shine for each and every scenario.







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