

serge
schoemaker
architects

Haarlem Primary School

This public primary school in Haarlem has undergone a metamorphosis. A number of strategic architectural interventions have introduced light, air, and space into the 1960s school building, giving it a completely fresh look. The project demonstrates that the renovation of post-war school buildings is a valid alternative to demolition and new construction.

The primary school is part of a characteristic green strip in the Schalkwijk district of Haarlem. The main block was built as a primary school in 1964, and a gym and kindergarten were added in 1967. With its efficient floor plan and partly standardized construction, the school served as a precursor to a series of patio schools built in the 1960s.

However, the building badly needed a makeover. As a multicultural school, it had gained a reputation as a struggling institution with a declining number of pupils. The introverted school building had fallen behind the times, and its appearance and colour palette were outdated. The once-famous patios suffered neglect and remained unused. In terms of learning, the school needed space for group activities and celebrations.

In 2015, after a design study carried out at the request of the Mevrouw Meijer Foundation, Serge Schoemaker Architects was appointed to oversee the renovation and extension of the primary school. The study showed that a future-proof result could be achieved through renovation, costing less than demolition and new construction. The spacious, bright classrooms make post-war schools like this ideal candidates for renovation.

The design for the renovation and extension makes use of the original clear corridor arrangement. The toilet blocks once positioned at the end of the corridors have been removed to open up views of the surroundings, giving the school an open character. Both inside and outside, large lime-green window frames now mark the ends of the corridors. They form part of a totally new colour palette.

The largest patio has been roofed and furnished as a multipurpose auditorium. The vertical rooflights overhead have been positioned to allow daylight to enter from various sides, without experiencing annoyance from direct sunlight. The required storage units have been created inside seating elements, custom made in birch plywood, which enclose the auditorium. This carefully designed, semi-open hall introduces a new sense of spaciousness to the school, offering extra room for group activities and celebrations.

LOCATION	Haarlem, Netherlands
YEAR	2015–2016
STATUS	Completed
CLIENT	Spaarnesant Foundation
PROJECT TEAM	Serge Schoemaker, Sanne Knoll, Alexander Beeloo, Roxana Vakili Mozafari
PHOTOGRAPHY	Max Hart Nibbrig









