



Product Design: a blueprint for the

Product Design at Millfield has developed to provide pupils with incredible facilities and equipment. With a dedicated team of staff nurturing the many inquisitive minds, pupils can explore their creativity to design different products and progress to university.

By Tom Parsons, Editor

When people look around the Product Design department, they are amazed by the facilities that pupils have access to. With Millfield having one of the best equipped Design and Technology departments of any school in the country, pupils can turn virtually any idea into a working product.

So when people learn that the subject was once taught in portacabins and old workshops, they often find the very concept hard to imagine. A variety of on-site locations including the Old Coach House, the Garages and the hut outside the current library have all been used by the department over the years.

But as the subject flourished and matured to include more of a problem-solving and analytical focus, a decision was made to

turn the old dining hall into a state-of-the-art facility, giving the department a worthy home.

The department now boasts four spacious design studios, each comprising a full suite



of computers with industry-standard design software. There are also two fully-equipped workshops with a dedicated technician area.

Pupils have access to extensive computer-aided design and manufacturing equipment which transforms their original concept into a prototype. They will also use laser cutters, CNC routers and rapid prototype printers.

There are five members of staff in the department, including a technician, and each one is highly-skilled and experienced in different areas.

Teacher in charge of Product Design Richard Smith recognises the impact that design has on the environment and encourages pupils to take that into consideration when creating a new product. "We believe that good design is holistic and we engender in our pupils a concern for the



future



environment. They are encouraged to think about the consequences of design, both good and bad. We also encourage them to improve their design vocabulary so they can make

“Having visited Millfield and met the design tutors, I’m confident the School will continue to produce excellent students who go on to produce great things.”

Anthony Dickens (right) left Millfield in 1993 and now runs a product and furniture design studio in London



discerning judgements about the products they might experience now and in the future.”

During Year 9, pupils are introduced to Design & Technology through a selection of controlled briefs. At GCSE level they can choose to study either Product Design or Food and Nutrition. These courses can be followed at A-level, where there is also the option to study a BTEC diploma in Art & Design.

Richard explains: “Pupils are not constrained by barriers when they design a product. They have access to resources and expertise, freeing them to follow their ideas and realise them. The staff possess a range of skills and experience to enable this to happen.”

With such outstanding resources available, and workspaces built to inspire creativity, it is common to see pupils regularly achieving 100 per cent for their coursework projects.

This can lead to nominations for Arkwright scholarships. These scholarships are awarded to schoolchildren around the country if they have excelled in the subject of Product Design.

A small number of scholarships are awarded every year and they are only given to the most talented pupils.

In the last two years alone, eight Millfield pupils have been nominated for the scholarship, highlighting the pool of talent the School has produced.

In May, Year 11 pupils Laura Dearman and Blake Parkinson became the latest high-achievers to be interviewed by an Arkwright panel and hope for a scholarship next term.

Many former pupils have gone on to study Product Design-related courses at university and some are now working in areas such as graphic design, engineering and architecture.

Former pupil Anthony Dickens, for example,

has achieved huge success in the industry since leaving Millfield in 1993. He has run a London-based product and furniture design studio for the past eleven years, creating innovative and thought-provoking objects.

Anthony regularly returns to Millfield to share his experiences and spoke to pupils at last month’s Careers Convention. Afterwards, he said: “Having visited Millfield and met the design tutors over the past four years, I am extremely confident the School will continue to produce some exceptional students who will go on to produce great things.”

By listening to experts and using the range of equipment at their disposal, pupils are given the best possible preparation for university and the world of work. Richard Smith is confident each pupil will be equipped with a wide-range of knowledge when they leave the School.





Onwards and upwards: Millfield's Product Design department facilities rival those of many universities and its provision prepares pupils for foundation or degree level courses

"Our pupil-centred approach allows us to really get an idea of what individuals want to achieve," he says. "With the varied expertise and super technology we provide, pupils are able to experience a broad range of disciplines."

Upper Sixth pupil Joren Heise was awarded a triple distinction in the BTEC Art & Design after excelling in the subject.

He will study a double degree course in Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Sheffield.

Joren was one of just 12 successful applicants accepted onto the course from an initial 300 hopefuls and he admits that Millfield helped him to realise this dream.

"The design units, together with the final major project work, have enabled me to put together an excellent architectural portfolio which means I can bypass the foundation year and continue straight onto the degree course. After this, I plan to study for my masters."

The Product Design department aims to provide pupils with everything they need to



realise their aspirations and Richard believes that pupils will be in a position to excel when their time at Millfield comes to an end.

"Every pupil is given the best opportunity to



progress thanks to the staff, equipment and facilities. Our provision rivals that of many universities and prepares pupils very well for foundation or degree level courses."