

St Marys Catholic Voluntary Academy

Education Sector- Case Study



Construction has been successfully completed on the innovative eco-building for St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy in Derby, following a fire that destroyed the original school. Delivered as part of a Department for Education pilot programme, the project became the UK's first biophilic school, setting a new benchmark for sustainable education design. Incorporating biophilic principles throughout, the building enhances occupant connection to nature, supporting both physical and mental wellbeing. Designed to be net zero carbon in operation, the completed school provides a resilient, future-focused learning environment for pupils and staff.

Innovaré Offsite supported the design, engineering, manufacture, and installation of the sustainable superstructure. The timber-constructed school uses Innovaré's i-FAST panels, designed for fire safety, thermal, and acoustic insulation, and loadbearing capabilities. i-FAST panels have an A1-rated non-combustible board and class 0 surface spread of flame rating, offering 60 minutes of standalone fire resistance.

The single-storey school includes a primary school and nursery with pavilions arranged along a central canopy. Each age group has a shared learning space, and the entrance building features a hall and communal areas. The buildings are naturally ventilated with solar panels and heated via air source heat pumps. Green roofs enhance biodiversity and local ecology.



Matthew Ling Photography

Project	St Marys Catholic Voluntary Academy
Client	Department for Education
Contractor	Tilbury Douglas
Architect	Hawkins Brown Architects
Value	£12m
Location	Derby, Derbyshire.
Completion Date	June 2023
Innovare duration onsite	12 Weeks
GIFA	2300 m ²
Framework	This is a DfE pathfinder project – the UK's first Biophilic school.
Sustainability	Net Zero Carbon in operation
Innovaré System	i-FAST



Tilbury Douglas's Project Manager, Neil Holland, said:

"I have previously delivered six school projects for the DfE. This is the first time I have used a SIPs system, and it has been a real gamechanger.

The project is moving at considerable pace and the quality that is being delivered is excellent and complementary to our Tilbury Douglas 'Right-First Time' approach."