

Creating Modern Learning Environments

This article features three older schools that have been improving their facilities in line with the Modern Learning Environments (MLE) tool, all with the goal of making their school buildings look modern and meet the needs of 21st century learning. These schools had too many toilets for the number of students and some non-essential storage spaces so, after careful consideration of the current and possible utilisation of every space, some were removed and used for break-out rooms or work areas. A key part of modernising the look of the schools was creating welcoming entrances through clever use of elements such as feature walls and landscaping.



Glenfield Primary — Above: The new DP office and waiting area was created from a corridor and a few unused spaces. Below: The back of the upgraded bag area with the covered bag area behind the red wall.



The exterior was repainted, which included painting the brick. As the roof needed replacing the school took the opportunity to increase the pitch and extend the roof along the front of the block to provide a large covered area. 'Blue Denim' Coloursteel was used to match the school's new colour scheme. A Zinalume feature wall adds to the modern look. Most of the windows in the block were in good condition and just required a repaint, with the high louvers being replaced with large opening windows which have improved airflow.

The school's 5YA provided most of the funds for the project, with the Board also contributing some funding. To finish off the junior area the PTA raised money to build a fantastic sandpit complete with shade sail.



Manurewa Intermediate — Above: Plastering over block walls and new planting opens up the area to create a welcoming entrance. Below: Modern and light remodelled art space.



Glenfield Primary School has given a traditional 1950s brick and weatherboard classroom block a 21st century makeover. Although the interior had been well looked after its overall look and feel was tired and in need of modernising. The school's goal was to achieve better use of the internal spaces and make the exterior more aesthetically pleasing. As part of her planning, the Principal found it useful to visit other schools to see how they had upgraded similar classrooms.

The upgrade to the block involved converting an adjoining toilet block to a workspace for use by teachers and small groups of children. The space is bright and airy achieved through painting the walls and ceiling in very light colours and adding extra windows – the existing ones were also replaced. It is fitted out with workbenches around the walls with a large table in the centre and has plenty of data and power points for laptop use. A long covered bag area was added to the exterior to replace a cramped locker room.

At the end of the block a DP office, waiting area and well organised storage space was created from a corridor and a few small unused spaces.

The interiors were repainted and new Corr-A-Perf ceilings were installed to provide a modern feel and much better acoustics. Speakers were fitted to enable teachers to wear microphones if required, and new lights, ceiling-mounted data projectors and more power points and data wiring were also installed. There are colourful pinboards in all the rooms and carpets are replaced, as required, throughout the school.



Glenfield Primary — Exterior of the redeveloped block showing posts in a cabbage tree design, new high-level windows and modern colours.



Large breakout spaces were created at Glenfield Primary (above) by redeveloping a surplus toilet block and at Manurewa Intermediate (below) by converting a corridor and cloakroom.



The transformation and utilisation of every space in the block was outstanding with it now looking and feeling modern. The school was very pleased with the project, which was completed within the agreed budget and on-time during a Christmas holiday break. The Principal felt a key success factor was developing an excellent relationship with the property consultant so the project process worked well and they achieved the best value for their funding. The school plans to upgrade its other two older permanent blocks in the same way as 5YA funding becomes available.

Over the last eighteen months since his appointment at **Manurewa Intermediate School** the new principal has worked with the Board of Trustees to transform the school's older facilities and grounds. The principal was very selective when making decisions to ensure they got good value for money to enable as many classrooms as possible to be upgraded.

The school looked carefully across the entire floor area to determine the best use of every space, big or small. A decision was made to remove all surplus toilets, along with some corridors and storage areas, and convert these into more useful spaces for use as breakout rooms. A bright, modern space with floor-to-ceiling display areas was created to cater for small groups of children as a learning support room. In addition, all remaining toilet blocks were upgraded.

Overall the classroom upgrades included repairs and painting of ceilings and walls, the installation of new marine carpet to the floors and part-way up the walls, the cleaning and repainting of heaters, along with adding more power and data points. Cabinetry and doors were repaired and repainted and new bench tops added. North facing windows were replaced with new joinery and tinted windows which filter the sun so well that curtains are no longer needed. Dark blue wall linings and grey furniture provide a neutral back drop for displays.