

Case Study

Temporary Exam Hall is a Class Act

The Concept

De Boer reinforced its enviable reputation for finding solutions to the most challenging projects after scoring top marks for building a soundproof structure for secondary school exam students near one of the noisiest roads in central London.

Not only did the company successfully custom build the examination hall for Pimlico Academy students within the set specifications, De Boer's specialist team managed to dramatically reduce the noise of heavy traffic, enabling pupils to sit their exams in peace.

Pimlico Academy, a secondary school specialising in art, music and performing arts for 11- to 19-year-olds, is currently undergoing major renovation as part of the £152 million government-funded *Building Schools for the Future* refurbishment programme.

With building work in progress and the gymnasium under construction, the local authority wanted somewhere large enough to stage the secondary school's GCSE exams.

The Requirement

Westminster City Council knew it needed to create additional space to accommodate exam students while Pimlico Academy in Lupus Road was undergoing extensive renovation and reconstruction.

The council-owned plot of land at Pimlico Gardens, just 200 metres away from the school, was earmarked for a temporary structure. But with the noisy Grosvenor Road on the doorstep, Westminster council needed a company with the knowledge and expertise to build a soundproof structure.

Having worked with De Boer in the past, the local authority knew the Brackley-based structure specialist had the experience to deliver a first-class service.

"For the Pimlico Academy assignment we needed to prove we were able to deal with the troublesome noise nuisance," explained De Boer's Business Continuity Director Mical de Boer.

"The council wanted the temporary hall to be large enough for at least 200 students, insulated against noise, and operational by early May for the start of the school's GCSE and AS-level exams," he added.



Our Approach

Specialist personnel from De Boer were allocated five days to complete the project. The job was completed in just over three days. A crew of seven built the A-frame structure measuring 15 metres by 45 metres in just one day. The remaining two-and-a-half days were spent fully insulating the building to make it as noise-free as possible.

The roof and walls were packed with specialist mineral wool to reduce traffic noise, the hall was fitted with carpets to combat underground noise, and heating and air conditioning systems were installed to ensure comfortable surroundings for students sitting exams.

The project was successfully completed in three-and-a-half days and the structure met with the council's exam hall specifications.

De Boer Key Account Manager Kate Hunter said: "It was a special and challenging project. We had to find a way of soundproofing the building against the noisy and busy Grosvenor Road.

"By insulating the walls and roof with mineral wool and putting sound-proofing underlay beneath the carpets, we have managed to get it as quiet as possible for exam students. It was an enormous challenge but we did it."

The Benefits

Pimlico Academy hailed the De Boer Exam Hall project a huge success.

Ken Robb, Pimlico Academy Director of Finance and Operations said: "To be able to get everyone into one big hall was so much better than holding the exams in the school's two gym halls as we have done in previous years.

"We've been able to hold two examination sessions a day. Students were advised to arrive 30 minutes early for their GCSEs and told to go straight to the temporary structure. It has worked very well.

"We are pleased with the structure. De Boer put in layers of insulation plus thick carpets with underlay to deaden the noise from the busy Grosvenor Road. Three sides of the hall are windowless which helped reduce the noise and distraction for students. The windows along the fourth wall look out over the River Thames so we have some natural light streaming into the building.

"The structure was big enough to hold 300 students but we only needed to seat 240 at a time. The air conditioning, heating and lighting in the hall has made it very comfortable for everyone. It has proved to be the ideal solution for us."

Statistics

Total equipment delivered: A-frame structure measuring 15 metres by 45 metres, lighting, insulation, linings, air-conditioning, distribution, power, fencing, security, associated infrastructure

Total De Boer team: A crew of seven

Total capacity of exam hall: Up to three hundred students at any one time

Total time taken: Three-and-a-half day