



## Life lessons: Hodgson Hall

*A school humanities building by Adrian James Architects combines formal purity with rich materiality and detailing.*

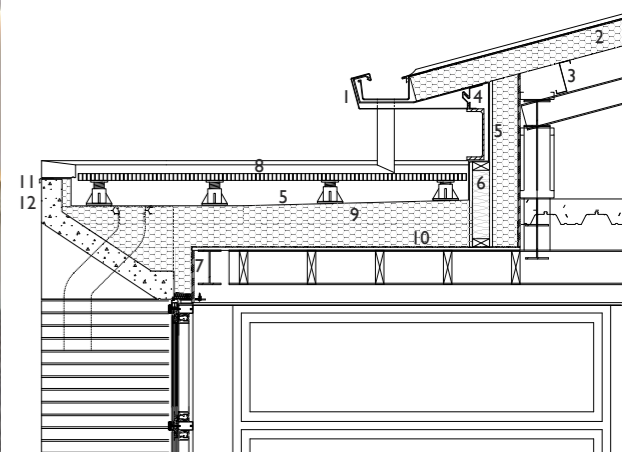
Won in competition by Adrian James Architects, Hodgson Hall is a teaching hub for the humanities at Shrewsbury School in Shropshire. Located on the banks of the River Severn, the school campus comprises stately academic buildings interspersed with rambling boarding houses – all constructed in red brick – and expansive playing fields. The scheme relates to its context through the use of a similar brick, but uses formalism to align itself with the academic buildings, while clearly differentiating itself from the boarding houses.

Responding to its site – an ‘island’ approached from four corners – the building adopts a square plan organised around a central atrium and amphitheatre. A vaulted ceiling, cantilevered stair and balconies imbue the atrium with a sense of drama and spaciousness. High-ceilinged classrooms with large windows line the perimeter of the plan, maximising daylighting, natural ventilation and views out.

**BELOW** Typical classroom. Manually operated high- and low-level windows ensure good levels of daylight and cross ventilation.  
**OPPOSITE** Front elevation. A low brick arch signals the entrance.





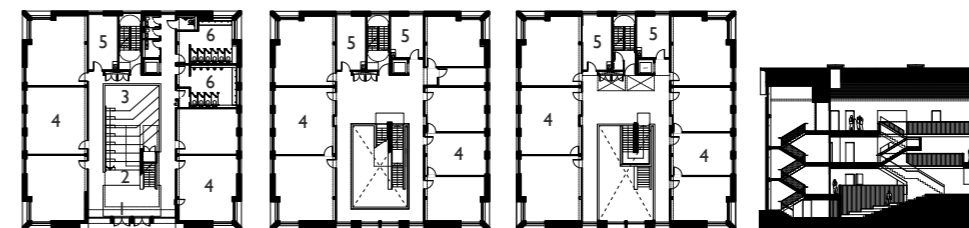


Emphasising the importance placed on symmetry and order, the building has four similar elevations with matching gables. “Any apparent classicism is a result of the formalism, not the detail”, explains Adrian James. “There is not a whiff of the classical orders: the building is stripped back to pure form-making to such an extent that it almost looks unreal, with the crisp lines and pure planes of CGI.”

Massing is also central to the architect’s

handling of the exterior. Corner windows are deeply recessed so the chamfered precast sills and lintels feel ‘weighty’, as do the giant brick piers. On the front facade, the double-height atrium window and the entrance are recessed to further express the building’s mass. The entrance doors are set back beneath a 12-metre wide shallow brick arch, creating a sense of occasion and compression as students and staff cross the threshold into the atrium.

**Credits** Architect: Adrian James Architects; structure: Bradley Associates; services: Ramboll; qs: EC Harris; Pave Aways; main contractor: Pave Aways; structural steelwork: Structural Steelwork; Rheinzink roof: Varla Cladding; bricks: Michelmersh; brick plinth: Ketley Brick Company; precast stone: Yorkshire Cast Stone; z purlins: Metsec; single-ply roofing membrane: Sarnafil; brick arch lintel: IG Lintels; windows, external doors: Schueco; lift: Schindler Lifts; internal doors: Leaderflush Shapland; ironmongery: Laidlaw; rooflights: Adexsi UK; carpet: Desso; sanitaryware: Venesta; Dalhem Ribba System Oak curved ceiling, balustrade cladding: LSA Projects; Terra Maestricht floor tiles: Mosa; Dune Microblock suspended ceilings: Armstrong Building Products.



**ABOVE LEFT** Timber-lined atrium and amphitheatre.  
**ABOVE RIGHT** Aerial view, detail section through facade at eaves level. Key: 1 zinc gutter; 2 150mm composite insulated panel, 3 z purlin, 4 aluminium fascia fixing plate, 5 single-ply membrane, 6 50x100mm timber stud wall, 7 vapour barrier/airtightness barrier on plywood deck 8 leaf guard, 9 cut-to-falls insulation, 10 vapour barrier on 25mm WBP plywood deck fixed to timber joists, 11 metal drip, 12 precast lintel.  
**LEFT** Ground, first- and second-floor plans; section. Key: 1 entrance, 2 atrium, 3 forum, 4 classroom, 5 office, 6 toilet.