

Peebles High School

‘Schools began with a woman or a man under a tree, who did not know they were a teacher, sharing their realisation with a few others who did not know they were students’. Louis Kahn

The project is founded on a shared vision of an orchard of learning: a disciplined grid of paths punctuated the orchard by clearings that act as departmental nodes for collaboration and community. This organising idea echoes both the conceptual “tree of learning” and its architectural expression, seen in the building’s structural rhythm and elevation strategy – combine to form the motif opposite.

The orchard metaphor is rooted in the site’s context, drawing from the landscape and treeline patterns of Peebles. The school is conceived as an extension of the outdoors, with a ‘tree inspired structure’ - a layered and transparent structure where the façades express vertical rhythm, depth, solar shading and material stratification, grounding the building in its setting while supporting environmental performance.

Internally, the plan prioritises legibility, visibility and cross interaction. The atria interrupt long corridors, creating informal learning moments, breakout spaces and opportunities for “learning beyond the classroom”. These spatial strategies support a brief focused on adaptability, varied pedagogy and future proof teaching models.

Externally, the orchard concept continues through an Arcadian campus: outdoor teaching terraces, growing spaces, performance amphitheatres and active landscaped routes that link sport, learning and community use.

The school is designed not only as a place of education but as a civic asset, a shared campus for Peebles and its wider community.

