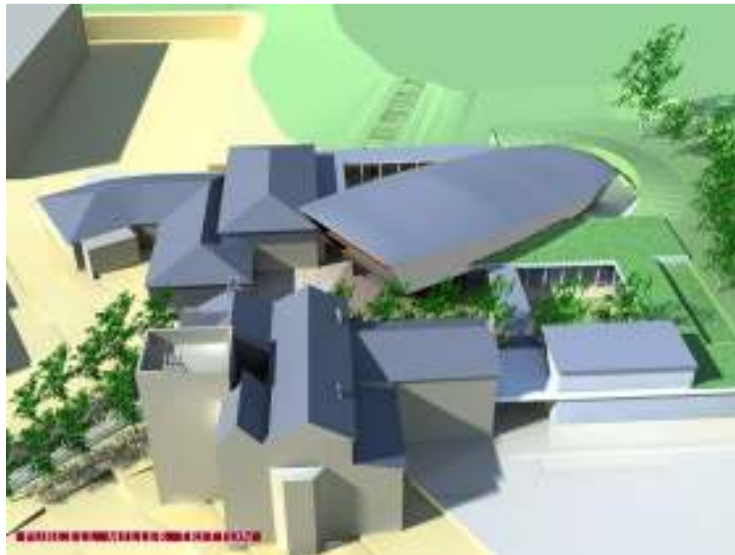


Dalton school aims to transform performing arts teaching

A LEADING Furness school is planning to create a multi-million-pound performing arts centre.





Dowdales School, in Dalton, wants to build an iconic venue which would include a 350-seater performance space, practice and recording studios, dance and drama studios, learning areas and units for professional artists.

The secondary school plans to build the Innovation and Skill Centre for the Performing Arts on its site to benefit schoolchildren through to higher education students, and the wider community.

Dowdales has been a performing arts college since 2001, specialising in the subjects of music, dance and drama.

The new build will stand in an empty space between the arts building, The Muse, and the Victorian Ashburner House.

The first concept drawings show the building in a style inspired by a shard of rock to fit in with the landscape.

Dowdales students and staff have put their ideas forward for the project.

It was pupils who suggested having accommodation for visiting teachers, students and artists.

Ian Booth, an assistant head at Dowdales and the school's leadership link for the school's performing arts specialism, said: "We have done lots of exciting things at Dowdales, becoming a performing arts college was extraordinary, this would be the icing on the cake, it would be just wonderful."

The school partners the Royal Shakespeare Company and the music centre brings many successful national musicians to Dowdales.

Mr Booth said: "As a school we need more specialist performing arts space because we are very popular and oversubscribed with over 1,100 students.

"As part of our specialism we are committed to developing and promoting the performing arts in the community.

"We already have a very successful music centre where people meet every Saturday, they tour and have concerts. We need a good concert centre for people to perform in.

"The new build would provide a concert hall. We are developing community dance and drama."

Mr Booth said Dowdales wants to develop a performing arts programme from school age learners through to higher education with its education partners alongside being a key resource for the wider community.

He said: "This is a resource for Dalton, Furness and the region."

Mr Booth said it was not a commercial project to rival to other venues.

Dowdales now aims to raise £50,000 by the end of this school year to take the project forward.

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