

FACTSHEET #10

The case for clay brick schools

A school should be the embodiment of stability, permanence and strength. It should protect children from the dangers of the world at large, while providing an environment that supports teaching and learning. Clay Brick has always been the construction material of choice for schools because of properties inherent in its nature.





THE CASE FOR CLAY BRICK SCHOOLS

We are all well aware of the responsibilities of scholars, teachers and parents in the education process. But a huge responsibility also lies with government to provide infrastructure conducive to learning. Education infrastructure is the government's investment in South Africa's future.

A well-built school is much more than a shelter from the weather. For many older South Africans, their school is a family legacy; children proudly attend the same school as their parents and grandparents.

It isn't just the lessons they are taught that stay with them to adulthood, but the school's values and ideals. Pride and self-respect ensure that pupils study hard, practice and do their best in school activities, as well as take care of school property. Their successes encourage parents and the community to support school events and fundraising, enabling the school body to further improve on education.

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Many of South Africa's eminent schools were built between 1900 and 1930... of clay brick. These schools still stand proudly today as a legacy, and are as strong and beautiful as the day they were built.

Clay Brick was the construction material of choice then - as it is today - because of properties inherent in its nature.



Montana High School Library in Worcester makes superb use of the natural insulating properties of clay brick. Photograph courtesy of Worcester Brick.



Afrikaans Seuns Hoerskool in Pretoria matched the red brick from the original 1929 building when they extended their learning centre in 2013, to ensure a uniform appearance. Photograph courtesy of Corobrik.



SECURE & PERMANENT

Schools built with clay brick allow children to learn in safety. The natural structural strength and dimensional stability of clay brick, coupled with its high fire rating ensure that children are well protected against natural disasters as well as civil crime, vandalism and unrest.

This strength and durability leads to a lifespan that outlasts almost any other practical building material – 100 years and more.

Clay bricks are entirely natural, contain no pollutants or allergens and are resistant to ants, borer and termites. Clay brick is inert releasing no VOC's (Volatile Organic Compounds) or toxic fumes to impact on air quality.

COMFORTABLE & QUIET

Clay bricks withstand extreme weather conditions; they are water resistant and impervious to all weather. They absorb moisture so that walls that become damp, dry out just as quickly (without ugly colour changes).

Clay bricks also have well-known thermal insulating properties, offering natural coolness in summer and warmth in winter. Together with its ability to regulate air humidity, pupils and teachers can enjoy an environment close to the preferred human comfort zone in both the coolest and hottest months. This is important as no school can afford heaters and air-conditioners in its classrooms. Unlike other building materials, clay brick's high thermal mass keeps classrooms cooler for longer, allowing children to concentrate throughout the day.

The density of clay brick means they resist the transmission of airborne sound waves. Pupils and teachers are not subjected to excessive noise from adjoining buildings or classrooms.

COST-EFFECTIVE & PRACTICAL

While initial infrastructure is sponsored by government, it is up to schools themselves to run cost-effectively. Money spent on maintaining existing buildings could be better used for enhancing learning experiences through new facilities and teachers. Exposed brick and face brick buildings are extremely low maintenance, reducing operating costs as well as downtime due to repairing, replastering and repainting of walls.

Clay bricks are rich in tradition and fulfil all the requirements for school infrastructure, offering the most efficient and cost-effective building material solution in the long-term.

For further information:

The Clay Brick Association of South Africa

Website: www.claybrick.org