

Oregon Historic Site Form

Clarendon School
9325 Van Houghton Ave
Portland, Multnomah County

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME

| | |
|--|--|
| address: <u>9325 N Van Houghton Ave</u> <input type="checkbox"/> apprx. addr | historic name: <u>Clarendon School</u> |
| <u>Portland</u> <input type="checkbox"/> vcnty <u>Multnomah County</u> | current/ other names: <u>Clarendon Primary School</u> |
| Optional Information assoc addresses: (former addresses, intersections, etc.) location descr: (remote sites) | block nbr: _____ lot nbr: _____ tax lot nbr: _____ township: _____ range: _____ section: _____ 1/4: _____ zip: _____ |

PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS

| | |
|---|---|
| resource type: <u>Building</u> height (# stories): <u>1</u> | total # eligible resources: <u>2</u> total # ineligible resources: <u>0</u> |
| elig. evaluation: <u>eligible/significant</u> | NR status: _____ (indiv listed only; see Grouping for hist dist) |
| primary constr date: <u>1970</u> (c.) <input type="checkbox"/> secondary date: _____ (c.) <input type="checkbox"/> (optional--use for major addns) | NR date listed: _____ |
| primary orig use: <u>School</u> | orig use comments: _____ |
| secondary orig use: _____ | |
| primary style: <u>Brutalism</u> | prim style comments: _____ |
| secondary style: _____ | sec style comments: _____ |
| primary siding: <u>Standard Brick</u> | siding comments: _____ |
| secondary siding: <u>Concrete: Other/Undefined</u> | |
| plan type: <u>School (General)</u> | architect: <u>Annand/Boone/Drynan/Huffstutte</u> |
| | builder: <u>Todd Building Company</u> |
| comments/notes: <u>HRI Rank III.</u> | |

GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS

| | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| survey project name or other grouping name | <u>PPS Historic Building Assessment 2009</u> | <u>Survey & Inventory Project</u> |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|

farmstead/cluster name: _____ external site #: 150
(ID# used in city/agency database)

SHPO INFO FOR THIS PROPERTY

NR date listed: _____
ILS survey date: 6/12/2009
RLS survey date: 6/12/2009
Gen File date: _____

106 Project(s)



North elevation

ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

(Include expanded description of the building/property, setting, significant landscape features, outbuildings, and alterations)

Description Summary

Clarendon Elementary School is located in north Portland in the Portsmouth neighborhood. The school complex consists of the 1970-1971 main classroom building (150A) and a 1970-1971 play shed (150B). The main classroom building is a single story poured concrete structure comprised of a series of interconnected hexagons. The primary cladding is red brick and horizontal tongue-and-groove siding. Each hexagonal building unit features a modestly pitched hexagonal roof capped by a hexagonal-shaped cupola glazed with multi-colored glass. The expressive use of poured concrete on the interior as the primary structure with little emphasis on hierarchical ornamentation is illustrative of the Brutalist style.

Architectural Description

The main building at Clarendon (150A) is situated at 9325 N Van Houten Street in the Portsmouth neighborhood of Portland, Oregon. The neighborhood largely consists of residences constructed 1940-1970. The primary entrance to the facility is from N. Clarendon Avenue. Adjacent to residences to the north, east, and south, the 3.27 acre parcel is also adjoined by the broad open play fields of Northgate Park to the west. The school complex consists of the 1970-1971 main classroom building (150A) and a 1970-1971 play shed (150B).

The main classroom building, approached from the south, consists of a series of eleven hexagonal forms or "pods" arranged around a pair of central multi-purpose rooms. At each exterior corner a hexagonal-shaped concrete column serves as the primary support for wide overhanging eaves that shade the exterior walls. The exterior walls are sheathed with elongated bricks laid in an all stretcher bond. Immediately above the brick walls is a plain fascia consisting of horizontal tongue-and-groove boards. Each exterior wall is pierced with a pattern of openings consisting of a window and a louvered vent, a door, and a slender two part window. The exterior of the rear (north) multi-purpose pod largely lacks openings.

The principal entry, located on the south side of the building, is distinguished by the presence of a row of ten unadorned hexagonal columns. The columns support the overhanging roof and create a sheltered walkway and waiting area. Recessed between the intersection of two pods, the entrance consists of a paired set of metal doors flanked by a two part plate glass window.

The hexagonal form facilitated the design of the school following an "open classroom" concept without corridors or interior walls to separate classrooms from one another. Beyond the entry lobby, the main gathering spaces are contained within the three central pods. The most prominent of these spaces is the central pod which features a large concrete column with several arches that branch out to meet individual glulamated ridge beams which in turn support the hexagonal pitched roof. A platform with a safety railing, accessed via a stair, encircles the concrete column. Several steps descend from the platform to the base of the concrete column. Globe lights, suspended from the ceiling, supplement the illumination provided by the glazing in the cupola. Between the northernmost common area pod is a glass enclosed courtyard that features some original concrete playground forms as well vegetation. Immediately to the north of this courtyard is a large multi-purpose area/gymnasium that features exposed concrete masonry unit walls.

Six classrooms open directly off of the two central pods. Designed to hold up to approximately 90 students, each classroom is fairly spacious. The provision of each classroom with chalkboards and white boards, a large wash basin, low-lying cabinets and work counters, and women and men's bathrooms enables each classroom to function independently.

Alterations/Modifications

In 1988, new kitchen equipment was installed in a rear pod that also houses the boiler and storage spaces to accommodate the need for warm meals for both students and community users of the facility. No other significant modifications or alterations to character defining features of the school are evident.

HISTORY

(Chronological, descriptive history of the property from its construction through at least the historic period [preferably to the present])

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Significance Statement

The Brutalist-styled Clarendon Primary School represents one of the most significant departures from conventional architectural forms utilized by Portland Public Schools during the mid to late twentieth century. One of last schools constructed in the district to alleviate crowding, Clarendon was actually paid for through sales of surplus property – an indication that other areas of the city was experiencing declining enrollment. At a cost of \$1.1 million dollars, the school was designed by Harold Boone of Annand Boone Drynan and Hufstutter and built by the Todd Building Company in 1970-1971.

Planning for the school began in the 1960s, when the district purchased lots 2 through 40 of Block 11 in the College Place Addition between 1962 and 1968. Following the purchase of the lots several existing buildings on the property were demolished in 1964 and again in 1970. When the project received approval, North Clarendon Avenue was vacated and the site was graded and prepared for construction of the school building (PPS School Chronology Binder).

Unlike the earlier “finger plan” schools constructed during the post-war period in Portland (See Ogata 2008), the Clarendon Elementary School was based upon the hexagon as the organizational unit for each classroom and common space in the building. Each hexagon or “pod” could house up to 90 students in an open classroom environment – an experimental shift in educational focus. When opened, Clarendon “rejected grades in favor of performance groupings” (PPS Staff Report 1971: 2). The advantage of this educational approach was to group students together regardless of age into groups with similar levels of understanding. Daily evaluations were made to determine whether students should shift groups depending upon their achievement (PPS Staff Report 1971: 2).

The design of the school was tailored to this method of teaching. The lack of walls, doors, and corridors, wide open classroom space, and use of bright colors such as oranges and yellows, smaller scale cabinets and sinks, as well as formed concrete columns that resembled tree trunks created unique interior experiences. The independence of each pod was further enhanced by having direct access to the exterior and neighboring Northgate Park thus minimizing potential distractions during recesses and increasing fire safety.

The method in which the design for the school was chosen was also unique for Portland Public Schools. Typically, school designs in the mid-twentieth century were created through the district’s building facilities and management department and approved by the Superintendent and PPS Commissioners. For Clarendon, however, a decentralized facilities planning model was adopted where 29-31 individuals consisting of area residents, teachers, and school administrators “visited other schools, studied drawings and writings” and eventually chose the “open style” (Oregon Journal 11-12-1971). Then Superintendent of PPS Robert W. Blanchard noted that this was “the first school construction program completed under the decentralized approach with substantially greater involvement of citizens and staff” (PPS, Clarendon Elementary School: np).

The utilization of a hexagon as a building form has an extensive history in the United States as hexagonal schools, churches, and meeting houses were erected as early as the eighteenth century in recognition of the hexagon’s geometric balance and harmony. From 1900-1930, planners found the hexagon as a useful way of organizing complex urban and suburban developments that lent a degree of rationality to street patterns (Ben-Joseph and Gordon 2000: 237-265). From an educational perspective, the hexagon created the basis for “unit” schools that were constructed during the 1950-1970 period to facilitate the use of the “open classroom” instructional philosophy (Michigan SHPO 2003: 23).

The firm chosen to design the school was probably familiar with the design conventions due to their experience in the design of other schools throughout Oregon. Founded in 1964, the architectural firm of Annand, Boone, Drynan, and Hufstutter grew out of a practice established by 1934 by J.D. Annand. The firm was renamed several times as other partners were added but J.D. Annand remained the principal until 1983. The firm designed numerous high schools and secondary schools in Oregon. Some examples included David Douglas High School, Parkrose Heights Jr. High School, Corvallis-West View Jr. High School, and the Oregon College of Education Student Center (American Architects Directory of 1962). The Annand firm was also responsible for the design of the Theater building and portions of the School of Architecture buildings at the University of Oregon and the Student Center, Humanities, and Social Science Buildings at Western Oregon State University (Ritz 2003: 13).

While Clarendon does not meet the 50 year standard for National Register eligibility and is not considered exceptionally significant, the following eligibility determination is provided for future district planning purposes. Given the uniqueness of both the design and planning process used to arrive at the design choice, the Clarendon School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. As the first Portland school planned in a decentralized and collaborative manner that involved citizens, school administrators, and teachers, Clarendon set an important precedent for community involvement. It is therefore associated with a significant historical pattern or trend in educational facilities planning and policy thus meeting the standard of National Register Criterion A. The building is also eligible under Criterion C, as a unique school building type in the City of Portland. No other hexagonal unit schools were constructed in Portland either before or since the Clarendon building was erected. The building retains much of its historical integrity on the exterior and interior.

RESEARCH INFORMATION

(Check all of the basic sources consulted and cite specific important sources)

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Title Records | <input type="checkbox"/> Census Records | <input type="checkbox"/> Property Tax Records | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Histories |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sanborn Maps | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biographical Sources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SHPO Files | <input type="checkbox"/> Interviews |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Obituaries | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspapers | <input type="checkbox"/> State Archives | <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Photographs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> City Directories | <input type="checkbox"/> Building Permits | <input type="checkbox"/> State Library | |

Local Library: Multnomah County Library

University Library: Portland State University Library

Historical Society: Oregon Historical Society

Other Repository: PPS Archives

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Bibliography: American Architects Directory of 1962.

Ben-Joseph, Eran and David Gordon. "Hexagonal Planning in Theory and Practice." *Journal of Urban Design*. Vol. 5, No. 3: 237-265.

Michigan SHPO. "An Honor and an Ornament: Public School Buildings in Michigan." Lansing, MI: Michigan State Historic Preservation Office of the Michigan Historical Center, 2003.

Ogata, Amy F. "Building for Learning in Postwar American Elementary Schools." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 67, no. 4, December 2008: 562-591.

Oregon Journal. "Something Different.....Educational Architecture's 'Change of Pace' See in Neighbor Planned Clarendon School." 11-12-1971.

Portland Public Schools. "Clarendon Begins Era in Education." PPS Staff Report. Vol 4, No. 1: 2 (December 1971).

_____. Clarendon Elementary School. 1972.

_____. School Chronology Binder. Nd.

Ritz, Richard. E. *Architects of Oregon. A Biographical Dictionary of Architects Deceased – 19th and 20th Centuries*. Portland: Lair Hill Publishing, 2003.



Main building (150A), looking southeast.



Play shed (150B), looking north from underneath play shed.



Main building (150A), looking south.



Main building (150A) from underneath play shed, looking west.



Main building (150A), detail of columns near entrance (at right), looking north.



Main Building (150A), detail of entrance space and concrete column, looking north.



Main Building (150A), detail of cabinets and hand washing basin, looking west.



Main Building (150A), classrooms "b" and "c", looking west.



Main Building (150A), detail of branched concrete column in classroom, looking east.



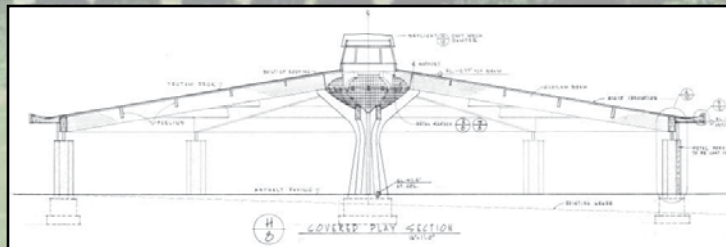
Main Building (150A), all purpose room/gymnasium, looking south.

Clarendon School

9325 N Van Houten Ave, Portland OR, 97203

[View Site in Google Maps](#)

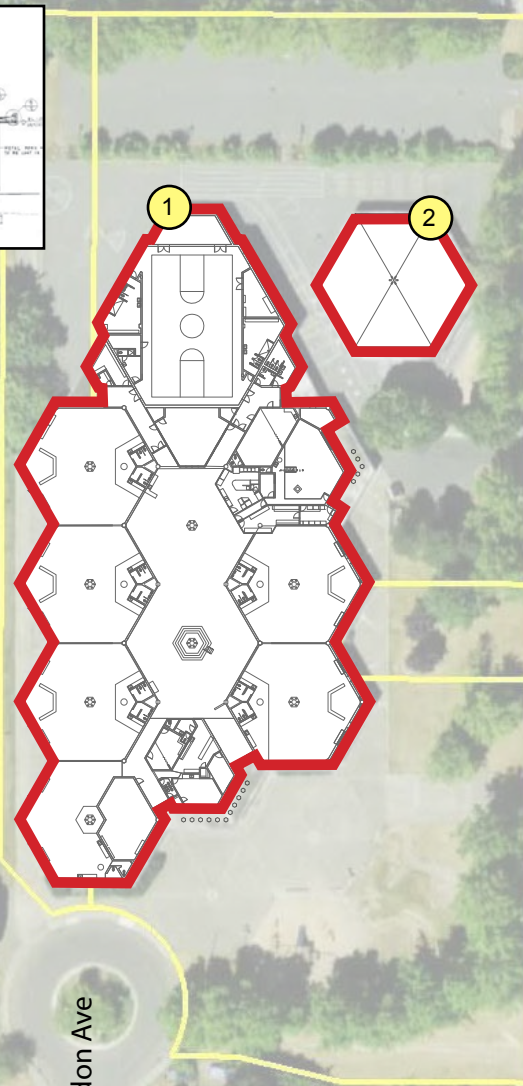
N Fessenden St



Section drawing showing interior concrete column, 1970.



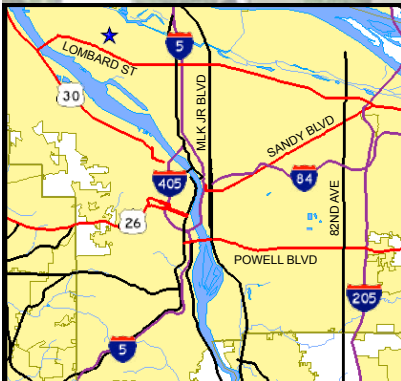
2009 Photo of the Clarendon School






N Van Houten Ave

N Clarendon Ave

Aerial photo © 2009 Metro, Portland OR Imagery Date: July 12, 2007



Historical Significance and Building Integrity

-  Contrib: High Significance
-  Contrib: Moderate Signif.
-  Non-Contributing



Building Periods

1. Main Building (150A), 1970
2. Play Shed (150B), 1970



CLARENDON ELEMENTARY – 150

9325 N VAN HOUTEN AVE 97203

PPS HISTORIC ASSESSMENT



DRAWING: ANNOTATED PLAN

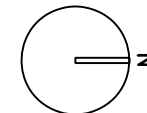
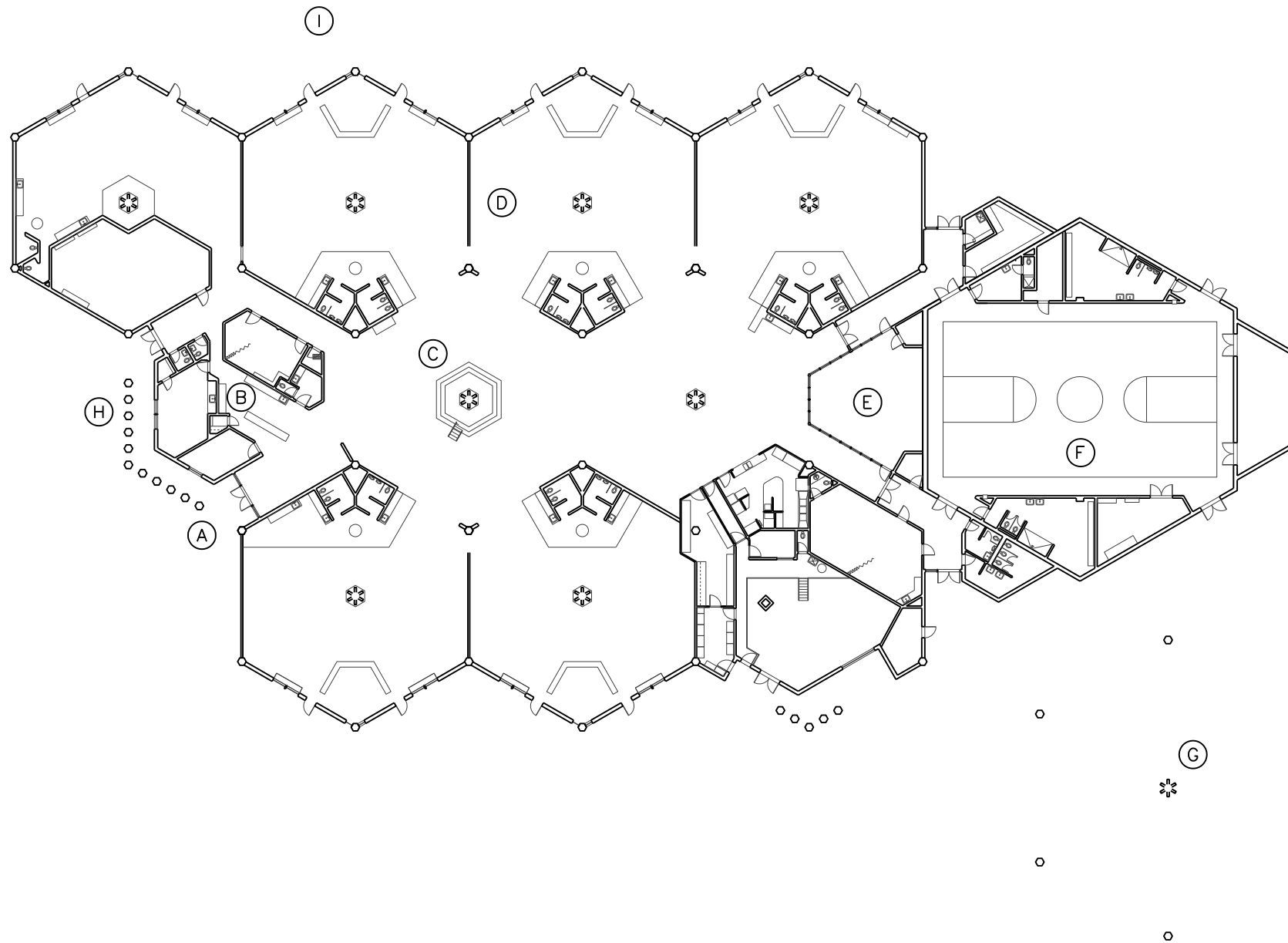
DATE: Sept. 4, 2009

KEYNOTES:

- (A) MAIN ENTRANCE OF THE 1970 BUILDING CONSISTS OF A DOUBLE DOOR ENTRY RECESSED BELOW A PRONOUNCED EAVE.
- (B) MAIN OFFICE SPACE.
- (C) MAIN CENTRAL MEETING SPACE (OR "POD") FEATURES A BRANCHED CONCRETE COLUMN. A SIX SIDED STAIR ENCIRCLES AND DESCENDS TO THE BASE OF THE COLUMN. ANOTHER STAIR RISES TO A WALKWAY THAT ENCIRCLES THE COLUMN. A CLERESTORY WINDOW IS LOCATED IMMEDIATELY ABOVE THE COLUMN AND EXHIBITS MULTI-COLORED WINDOW PANES.
- (D) EACH CLASSROOM IS OPEN TO THE CENTRAL SPACES.
- (E) CONCRETE FORMS ARE SITUATED IN A SMALL COURTYARD THAT ALSO SERVES AS A LIGHTWELL.
- (F) GYMNASIUM FEATURES CINDER BLOCK WALLS.
- (G) PLAYSHEDED.
- (H) SIX SIDED COLUMNS CREATE A SHELTERED WALKWAY.
- (I) SCHOOL PROPERTY IS BORDERED TO THE WEST BY NORTHGATE PARK.

GENERAL NOTES:

- ① EACH CLASSROOM FEATURES A WASH BASIN, BATHROOMS, CENTRAL BRANCHED CONCRETE COLUMN, AND FREESTANDING COAT STORAGE AREAS. TACKBOARDS AND DRY ERASE BOARDS COVER OVER THE ORIGINAL CHALKBOARDS THAT EXTENDED FROM THE FLOOR TO ABOUT FOUR FEET HIGH. EACH CLASSROOM ALSO EXHIBITS TWO EXTERIOR DOORS THAT PROVIDE FOR RAPID EGRESS.
- ② EXTERIOR WALLS ARE LAID IN AN ALL STRETCHER BOND WITH LARGE DIMENSIONED BRICK.
- ③ EACH "POD" FEATURES A SIX SIDED ROOF THAT TERMINATES AT A PEAK THAT EXHIBITS A SIX SIDED CLERESTORY WINDOW CONSISTING OF MULTI-COLORED FIXED PANES.
- ④ INTERIOR IS ENTIRELY CARPETED AS A SOUND DAMPENING MECHANISM.



1

CLARENDON ELEMENTARY – 1ST FLOOR

SCALE: 1" = 40'-0"