

Location

To the north of the town centre, on the east side of Chester Road, north of its junction with Powell Road.

History

Grove Park School was founded in 1895 as a school for boys, but it soon provided education for girls as well. As numbers increased, purpose-built accommodation for girls was provided as Grove Park Girls Grammar School. Work started in 1936 and was completed in 1939, to designs of the county architect, Gilbert D Wiles, possibly based on earlier designs prepared by his father and predecessor as county architect, Walter D Wiles. The school fits into a pattern for the provision of secondary education following the 1902 Education Act, in which grammar school building had an important role, and in its scale, reflects the growing importance of education in the interwar period. The importance of secondary education for girls had already been recognised by the Welsh Intermediate Education Act of 1889, but was boosted by the 1902 Act: provision was made either in separate schools (as in this example), dual schools (in which boys and girls schools were combined under a single roof), or mixed schools. As a reflection of its completion date, the school incorporated air-raid shelter provision from the outset.

Exterior

Grove Park School conforms to the common standard for inter-war school design both in its planning and also in its choice of style, which, whilst it has some elements which are reminiscent of art deco, broadly conforms to a neo-classical tradition but in a 1930s interpretation.

It is constructed of brushed brick with panels of herringbone and geometric arrangements. The main west facing entrance range is a wide 15 bay symmetrical façade with hipped advanced end bays and an advanced central entrance of stone. A dedication stone next to the entrance doors was laid by William Jones JP, Chairman of the Governors June 1938. Three wings project backwards, a central hall wing and on the outside two mirrored classroom wings. Quadrangles and cloistered walkways fill the spaces between the wings.

Interior

Internally it is utilitarian and hard wearing, as would be expected of a large education building. The main feature of interest is the double sweep stair in the main entrance hall with terrazzo treads and cast iron balustrading. Similar, but smaller stairs are located at the rear of each side wing. The basic layout of the classrooms survives largely intact, together with some original detail such as dado panelling, doors, and parquet flooring.

Listed

Listed for its special architectural interest on the grounds of its quality and character as a key example of an interwar girl's grammar school in the neo-classical tradition (in a 1930s interpretation) which survives largely intact, and in view of its aesthetic merit as an ambitious building, which demonstrates stylistic flair in features such as the quality of the double sweep stair and the external brickwork.