

## View from here - Brainwave wrapped up in bamboo



### The Green School in Bali is the jewel in sustainability's crown, writes Martin Spice

Few schools wrap their mission statement into their name, but The Green School in Bali has done so. Its name is a statement of intent, with more than a hint of defiance, for this extraordinary school has an uncompromising vision: to inspire in its students "a sense of responsibility, spirituality and morality", and deliver "a generation of global citizens who are knowledgeable about, and inspired to take responsibility for, the sustainability of the world".

A visit to The Green School, which I made recently, makes clear very quickly that this is not just about using brown paper envelopes instead of plastic, recycling newspapers or tweaking the science curriculum to include a bit more about global warming. Visitors on the organised tour arrive at a soaring bamboo structure that spans the river, and are then led to the vortex hydropower project that it is hoped will meet the school's electricity needs. From there, the tour takes you up the steep hillside, past gardens and bamboo buildings that serve as offices, classrooms, admin buildings and performance

spaces. All of these are world-class, cutting-edge buildings, with the three huge, breathtaking domes that dominate the upper site as candidates for the Guinness Book of Records' largest bamboo edifices in the world. Bamboo in Bali is of course, a sustainable and replenishable resource, hence the perfect material for buildings, and even classroom furniture.

The school is the brainchild of Canadian John Hardy and his American wife Cynthia and has been largely financed by the sale of a successful jewellery business. It has attracted much media interest and the great and the good have flocked to see a school with a philosophy that has clearly struck a chord globally. Visitors and supporters who donate have their names carved into the bamboo structures at the school's heart - Damien Hirst and Maia Norman among them. But it has not all been easy. Staff speak of the difficulties some teachers have had in adjusting to living on such a green campus with self-composting toilets, and the senior management has seen a number of changes in the

school's short operating life. But director Ronald Stones is one of the most experienced educationists in South East Asia and if anyone can blend the rampant idealism with the practicalities of equipping students with recognised certification, it will be him. The IGCSE is making an appearance in the near future. Alongside English, maths, drama and business studies will run 21st-century science, a new course starting this year that could have been devised with the Green School in mind. Older students will be offered the International Baccalaureate. But Mr Stones says: "The whole point ... is not to produce more of the same as outputs of its educational product." There is more than a little of the "hippy in the jungle" about the school - an impression reinforced by the large crystal imported from South America that serves as the centrepiece for a healing circle. But the school has an integrity, vision and determination that could quickly make it one of the most innovative and inspiring in the world.