



Wilson School's winning design

By Lucy Vickers

The Wilson School for disabled children has been recognised in the New Zealand Architecture Awards.

It is believed to be the first purpose-built special needs school in New Zealand and provides educational care for children with mental and physical disabilities.

One of three winners in the public section, the Takapuna building was designed by Opus Architecture and is made of glass and cedar.

Situated on land leased from the Wilson Home Trust, the architects' statement describes it as a "tranquil and

serene site in a well-established park-like setting".

Architect Ego Leung says the designer chose a very simple layout to complement the location.

"It's a very beautiful site and we wanted to create a calming, peaceful environment."

The statement says the two-level building "connects quietly to the landscape and expresses a close relationship to nature without overwhelming it".

It opens to the north to make the most of natural lighting and the forest set-

ting.

Mr Leung says there is a strong link between the outdoors and indoors "so wherever you walk you feel connected to the surroundings".

"There was strong collaboration between Opus and the school and it's a good example of client and architect communication.

"It's setting a precedent for other special needs schools," he says.

The winning projects will be considered for the New Zealand Architecture Medal, to be announced in May.



Glass and cedar: The Wilson School has won a New Zealand Architecture Award