



Special school, chapel scoop design awards

Spirit of collaboration produces architecture that buoys vulnerable pupils, say judges

BY ANNE GIBSON

A Takapuna school for special-needs children and its chapel last night scooped the country's top national architectural awards.

The Wilson School in St Leonards Rd, off Lake Rd near Takapuna Grammar School, and its chapel won this year's Institute of Architects awards, supported by Resene.

The school, by Opus Architecture, was named New Zealand's best-designed new building under a new system where the institute awards only one medal to one new building.

The church, designed by Haughey & Fox and Partners and built in 1965, won an enduring architecture award.

Gerald Parsonson of Parsonson Architects in Wellington headed the judging panel, which praised the school for about 60 pupils, saying it was uplifting and extremely special, meeting the needs of vulnerable children.

"From the lofty, generous space which serves as foyer, hall and gymnasium to the intimate classrooms, the all important pragmatic requirements — wide pathways, hardwearing materials, ample storage — are cleverly integrated, reinforcing the nurturing quality of the

school environment. Recessed openings and tinted glazing ensure privacy while providing the occupants with views of the garden, the chapel and the city beyond," the judges said.

"An unwavering focus on the wellbeing of the pupils and staff and a genuine spirit of collaboration have allowed architect and client to create an extraordinary building, full of hope: architecture at its finest."

The new school provides educational care for children with severe mental and physical disability.

The architects and client had pooled their talents to create an environment dedicated to serving the needs of others in a thoughtful, respectful and delightful manner. The church also drew strong praise too.

"Seen through the pohutukawas of the Wilson Home site from busy Lake Rd, this little chapel is both dramatic and intriguing.

"Built in 1965 with a faceted frontage of white concrete block columns and a steeply pitched folded copper roof hovering above the glass side walls, this is design of the highest order," the judges said. the judges said.



PRAISEWORTHY: The Wilson chapel's design was judged to be of the highest order.