

CELEBRATION:
Students perform at
the official opening of
the Maltings Academy

£26.5m new school building is unveiled

Head urges pupils to be proud of high-tech facility

By **Georgina Cotton**
newsdesk@essexchronicle.co.uk

THE new £26.5 million Maltings Academy building was officially opened on Tuesday with new computers, interactive white boards and eco-friendly classrooms.

After addressing his pupils, Maltings principal John Szynal told the Chronicle he hopes they will be proud of their new school.

"I have to say – and I've said this to students in assembly, though I don't think they believe me – that I want the building to be theirs," he said.

Decorating

"Everybody remembers their school and I want them to start making it look like a school and decorating it and saying what else they want. Hopefully they will be proud of it."

The building at the Spinks Lane, Witham, school was officially opened this week by the Schools' Commissioner, Dr Elizabeth Sidwell CBE, and students heralded the event with music and songs.



OFFICIAL OPENING: (l-r) Dr Elizabeth Sidwell, principal John Szynal, Ian Foster, chairman of Academies Enterprise Trust, and Frank Butler, chairman of governors

"Really it was an excellent opening – it all went very well and the people that came were very impressed with the building," said Mr Szynal.

"But what really matters are the teachers and the students – the building is the icing on the cake."

The new building boasts a number of high-tech features, including a £1.5 million IT suite.

As part of the package, fully interactive white boards are based in every classroom, as

well as hundreds of new computers and a £60,000 audio visual system that will be used by drama students and in assemblies.

To date, the 900 students in Years 7 to 11 have had to share their sports facilities with 200 sixth formers, but now the groups have their own sports hall.

As well as being technologically well equipped, the new building is environmentally friendly.

The school is heated through

the use of biomass products, burning woodchips or wood pellets.

A ventilation scheme continually feeds fresh air through the buildings without the use of mechanical equipment and architects ensured maximum use is made of natural daylight.

Mr Szynal said: "Maltings Academy is buzzing with excitement and a wealth of aspirations, initiatives and new, superb facilities ready to meet the challenges of the 21st century."

Facelift

In 2008, the government decided to spend £50 million on improving Witham's schools, with New Rickstones Academy due to reopen with a multi-million facelift early next year.

Chairman of the Academies Enterprise Trust, the Essex-based sponsor of both Maltings and New Rickstones Academy, Ian Foster, said: "It represents a huge investment in secondary education in Witham which will soon be matched by another superb new centre for learning at New Rickstones."