



The colourful screens hope to help enforce social distancing | Photo source [Felix Speller](#)

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COLOURFUL SCREENS HELP SCHOOLS WITH SOCIAL DISTANCING

 ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

A startup design firm has created colourful screens for use in schools, to provide a warm and child-friendly way to ensure social distancing

Spotted: Around the world, schools in countries hard-hit by the coronavirus pandemic have had to shut down. Now, many of these are working on ways to allow students to return while also observing social-distancing guidelines. To help make this easier, UK furniture design and fabrication firm UNIT Fabrications has developed a series of colourful, mobile screens.

The screens were initially created as a special request by a local primary school, which needed a way to divide its existing space without making the school feel like a prison. UNIT came up with the idea for colourful plywood screens. The screens are low enough to allow teachers to see over them and are mounted on castors to make them easy to move around.

The use of plywood was a deliberate choice, to lend the screens warmth, and get away from the use of plastic screens seen in shops, which can feel more sterile. The wood is laminated on both sides, making it easy to clean, and the screen is framed by exposed plywood fins to soften its appearance. Each year group has its own colour, making it easier for students to stay within their social-distancing “bubble”.

UNIT Fabrications director Toby Hadden [explains that](#) “We were determined to design something that didn’t pull from the material language of a pandemic. We pushed to use a high-quality birch plywood to create solutions that had a warmth and material permanence.” In addition to the screens, UNIT has also designed vinyl wayfinding markings to use on floors and walls in the same colour palette.

A number of designers are working to develop ways to make social distancing more aesthetically pleasing. At Springwise, we have recently covered several of these ideas, including a redesign of

train interiors to provide more space for both passengers and bicycles and a stylish “cone of safety” for use in restaurants.

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18th June 2020

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Takeaway:

UNIT Fabrications’ screens are an excellent example of how some of the post-COVID-19 challenges faced by schools, businesses and individuals can be eased through the use of good design and creative thinking. The clever use of colours and materials allows schools to practice social distancing in a versatile and child-friendly way. After the pandemic, the screens can be repurposed as reading corners, gallery space or quiet study areas. UNIT Fabrications’ was founded earlier this year, and this is their first project.