



This Hyderabad school employs the built environment as a pedagogical instrument

Conceived by Pentaspace Design Studio, this cuboidal volume of exposed concrete and glass pegs movement as integral to the learning experience.

by [Bansari Paghdar](#) | Published on : Mar 11, 2026

Often, places of education and training are designed merely as rigid, one-dimensional institutes of learning, shaped as practical spaces that simply cater to a standard set of requirements. But in some projects, such as the Heartfulness International School in [Hyderabad, India](#), a deeper conceptual thread runs from an institution's core ethos to its physical environment. Made of [exposed concrete](#) and [glass](#) and conceived as a living ecosystem, it raises a question: one of the contrasts between its material and conceptual integration. Can a forest take root in such materials? If so, can it still manage to breathe?



For the Heartfulness International School, Pentaspace Design Studio considers the institutional architecture as a pedagogical instrument, attempting to shape children's holistic growth and development

Image: Courtesy of Heartfulness International School

"In our view, a forest can absolutely take root in concrete and glass—if architecture is designed to respect natural rhythms rather than replace them. When light, ventilation, landscape and materiality are thoughtfully integrated, built spaces can still 'breathe' and foster a living connection with nature. The role of architecture today is not to separate people from the environment, but to reinterpret nature within contemporary contexts—creating spaces that remain mindful, sustainable and emotionally grounding," the Indian architecture practice Pentaspace Design Studio, tells STIR.



Established in 2007, the Mumbai-based practice advocates for 'architectural synergy' and its articulation through numerous adaptable and activity-centric spaces that have connections with nature

Image: Courtesy of Heartfulness International School

Established in 2007, Mumbai-based Pentaspace Design Studio advocates the principles of 'architectural synergy' as a response to space, nature and natural light. Their emphasis is on meaningful architectural research that takes into account the changing needs of the community alongside devising new strategies for **contemporary design**, materiality and technology to create **sustainable design** solutions. For the Heartfulness International School, the **Indian architects** approach **institutional architecture** as a pedagogical instrument, attempting to employ the built environment to shape children's holistic growth and development. "The planning integrates **natural light**, open courtyards and seamless indoor-outdoor connections to encourage calmness, curiosity and interaction with nature. Spaces are scaled to feel warm and non-intimidating, allowing the built environment itself to nurture mindfulness, creativity and balanced learning beyond the classroom," the studio adds.



A large courtyard is at the heart of the project, guiding the layout and circulation within the school design
Image: Courtesy of Heartfulness International School

The **contemporary architecture** is informed by its structure, resisting ornamentation and decorative elements that do not serve the building. In doing so, an understated cuboidal envelope of glass is seen from a distance, screened by vegetation. As one approaches the building along a long, shaded, wide pathway, it becomes clear that the environment extends the idea of nature beyond vegetation.



A classroom in session showcases learning through various means

Image: Courtesy of Heartfulness International School

A large **courtyard design** is at the heart of the project, guiding the layout and circulation within the **school design**. The building layout is quite simple and easy to navigate: rectangular, with two corridors on the side, one leading to the forest and the other to a play area. The circulation is facilitated through active transitional spaces that encourage informal learning and spaces of pause and reflection. "Special consideration was given to clear zoning, short walking distances and safe movement patterns for different age groups, as this phase was for younger primary age group students. Natural ventilation, daylight and covered corridors help maintain comfort throughout the day. The entire school is also powered by electricity generated through **solar panels**, reinforcing the project's commitment to sustainability and environmental awareness for students. These decisions align with the larger conceptual approach of creating a calm, nature-integrated learning environment, where movement through the campus becomes part of the educational experience rather than just a functional requirement," the architects tell STIR.



The courtyard offers a variety of opportunities for students to engage in play

Image: Courtesy of Heartfulness International School

Surrounded by academic blocks, the courtyard offers **sensory experiences** through props, interactive objects and activities such as yoga and farming, maintaining a strong connection to nature and encouraging health and well-being. While spaces for children often use bright colours, the school architecture takes a different approach by using exposed concrete and white paint to let the students' artwork shine on the walls. Allowing the space to adapt over time with its users, the school design shifts the focus from the built environment to the creativity it nurtures.

Project Details

Name: Heartfulness International School

Location: Hyderabad, India

Architects: Pentaspace Design Studio

Year of Completion: 2025

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