

# top of the class

Feature by **Amelia Thorpe**  
Photography by **Darren Chung**

What can be done with a former Victorian school house? We head to east London to enjoy the glossy, chic transformation.



**above** At the top of Shirley's wish list was a robust range oven inspired by one she'd seen on holiday.

Shirley Cox occasionally finds passers-by peering in through her front windows. "When I put my head out of the door to see if they are looking for me, they apologise for their nosiness and say "what a nice kitchen!" she laughs. But, perhaps it's not surprising that people express interest in the house: it's a former Victorian school in a conservation area of east London, a stone's throw from the banks of the River Thames. Its sleek, contemporary kitchen is icing on the cake. "I love the contrast between the old and the new – it really works," says Shirley.

Designer Vivienne Warman at Kitchen Co-ordination says it's one of the most unusual and exciting homes she's seen. "The house is like a Tardis. You come in through the front door and think it will be small, but you're presented with a huge space full of character," she explains.

**above right** Pots and pans are kept out of sight in deep drawers to ensure a clutter-free scheme.

When Shirley, a consultant orthodontist, contacted Vivienne after seeing one of her kitchen designs in *The Essential Kitchen Bathroom Bedroom Magazine*, she asked for something sleek and modern. It had to be a departure from the existing kitchen, which was dark and traditional in style. "Shirley wanted a minimalist look, but I admit I wasn't so sure," recalls husband Graham. "In the end, we agreed that it should be her choice and now I'm really happy with it, too," he adds.

They began by removing a wall between the kitchen and dining room to create one open-plan space with a play area for children, Joe (three) and Connie (one). The next step was the purchase of an Aga, something that Shirley had set her heart on. "We stayed in a house with one dating back to the 1970's, and it was still going strong. I thought it would make a nice, contrasting feature," she says.

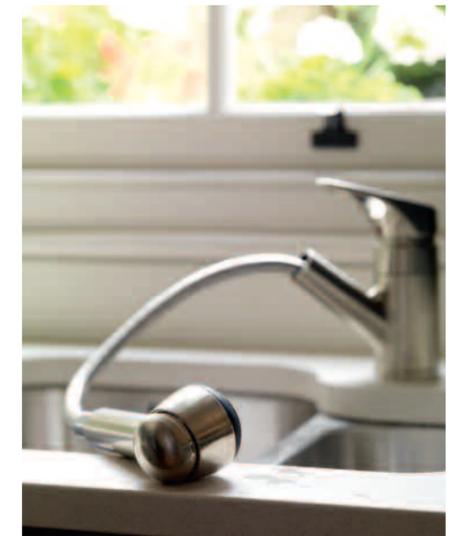


**left** Deliberately left on show, the support pillar brings character to the vast, now modern, space.

**above** The breakfast bar is a popular spot for family meals and with guests to sit and watch the cook.

**left** A fun element in the room, the photograph board is a constant reminder of happy memories.

**below & below left** A pull-out spray is ideal for washing food, dishes and kids' hands pre-dinner.



## kitchen profile

Planned and designed by Kitchen Co-ordination, Rational's Salvia and Cammee high gloss lacquer Cambia furniture creates a sleek and subtle mix in this open-plan setting. A classic Aga provides an in vogue contrast in style and colour while a peninsula topped in lightly textured Paloma Blanco Quarella stone offers ample preparation, eating and entertaining space, all resulting in a successful balance of form and function.

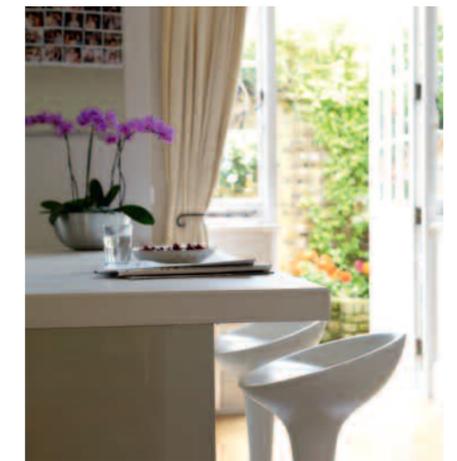
**Kitchen Co-ordination, 81 Penshurst Gardens, Edgware, Middlesex HA8 9TT.  
Tel: 020 8958 6262. [www.kitchencoordination.co.uk](http://www.kitchencoordination.co.uk)  
Expect to pay from £8000.**

There's another important feature in the room: the peninsula, topped with chenille-textured Quarella composite stone. "We had a dining table and never used it, so we find this is a much better solution for the way we live," explains Shirley. Overhangs on two sides mean there's enough room for at least six to pull up a bar stool and sit at the counter, and its size ensures plenty of space to serve and eat, as well as maximum storage to fully utilise every inch.

While the prominent iron pillar provides structural support in the room and injects a touch of Victorian character, Shirley and Graham really wanted to add more interest for optimum effect.

Vivienne suggested a mix of two subtle colours for the lacquer cabinetry: Salvia, a pale green, and Cammee, a warm cream. "The idea was to lighten and open up the room – these shades do just that to perfection," says Vivienne.

It's an entirely practical, as well as good-looking room, as Shirley explains, "We can be cooking or watching TV, the kids playing with the doors open to the patio, and everybody's happy. It's also great for entertaining." Though it may be an historic building, the new kitchen is anything but Victorian. "It's a very workable space and perfectly suits our family-orientated lifestyle," she concludes. ■



**above** Chunky stone surfaces lend themselves to the contemporary scheme, plus being hard-wearing and easy to clean, are well suited to a busy kitchen.

**below** Accessed via the French doors, a sun-filled patio is a cheerful setting in which to entertain, have a barbecue or enjoy a lazy summer soiree.



“You come in through the door and think it will be small, but you're presented with a huge space full of character.”

**above** With its comfy seating, the relaxed living area also doubles as a great place for play times.

**left** Anything from colanders to baking trays can be housed easily within the island's useful base.

## useful information

### Appliances

Pewter three oven electric range, £8200, at Aga. Tel: 0845 712 5207. [www.aga-rayburn.co.uk](http://www.aga-rayburn.co.uk)

H5972 combination microwave, £672, at Neff. Tel: 0870 513 3090. [www.neff.co.uk](http://www.neff.co.uk)

SHV55M03 dishwasher, around £519, at Bosch. Tel: 0870 727 0446. [www.boschappliances.co.uk](http://www.boschappliances.co.uk)

L14710VIT washer dryer, around £614, at AEG. Tel: 0870 535 0350. [www.aeg.co.uk](http://www.aeg.co.uk)

Similar fridge freezer, RSE8DZAS, £999, at Samsung. Tel: 0870 242 0303. [www.samsung.com/uk](http://www.samsung.com/uk)

Glacier extractor hood, around £899, at Elica. Tel: 01252 351111. [www.elica.co.uk](http://www.elica.co.uk)

Ideal drinks fridge, around £285, at Taylors Garden Buildings. Tel: 01508 489260. [www.taylorsgardenbuildings.co.uk](http://www.taylorsgardenbuildings.co.uk)

Fixtures & furnishings  
ARX160 under-mounted sink, £227, at Franke. Tel: 0161 436 6280. [www.franke.co.uk](http://www.franke.co.uk)

BlancoCurzon 7500-S spray tap, £245, at Blanco. Tel: 020 8452 3399. [www.blanco.co.uk](http://www.blanco.co.uk)

Pewter painted glass splashbacks, prices available on application, at Crawford Glass. Tel: 020 8520 4494. [www.crawfordglass.co.uk](http://www.crawfordglass.co.uk)

Paloma Blanco Quarella stone worktops, around £300 per linear m., at Rossi Stoneworks. Tel: 020 7609 7212. [www.rossistoneworks.com](http://www.rossistoneworks.com)

Bombo bar stools, around £295 each; similar sofa, around £495, at John Lewis. Tel: 0845 604 9049. [www.johnlewis.com](http://www.johnlewis.com)

Similar oak floor, from £42 per sq. m., at European Heritage. Tel: 020 7381 6063. [www.europeanheritage.co.uk](http://www.europeanheritage.co.uk)

Sparkling Iron Arc radiator, from £624, at Feature Radiators. Tel: 01274 567789. [www.featureradiators.co.uk](http://www.featureradiators.co.uk)

Magis Puppy children's chair, from £30, at Espacio. Tel: 020 7376 5088. [www.espacio.co.uk](http://www.espacio.co.uk)

Similar outdoor furniture, from £66 for a chair and £287 for a table, at Design Conscious. Tel: 01200 427313. [www.design-conscious.co.uk](http://www.design-conscious.co.uk)