



The old hot water cylinders and the newly refurbished plant room. High res jpegs available.

## **Outstanding maintenance delivers peace of mind to Herschel Grammar School**

- **Unexpected gas leak was a challenge**

Based in Slough, Berkshire, Herschel Grammar School is a selective, co-educational secondary school that was deemed outstanding in all categories in its last Ofsted inspection. Outstanding is the same word used by Judith Vucic, the school's business manager, when talking about the service and support she receives from Southern Maintenance Solutions (UK) Ltd, (SMS). The company has been providing a full maintenance contract for the school's heating and plumbing systems for over 10 years. The last two summers have proved particularly busy for the company as in 2019 the old oil boilers were renewed, whilst in 2018, the school had an anxious time when a series of gas leaks were discovered on existing steel pipework in the underground pipe ducts, just weeks before the school was due to open for the new academic year.

"The oil boilers were over 60 years old, more suited for a museum than a vibrant 21<sup>st</sup> century school with over a thousand pupils, and certainly not very efficient;" commented Vucic. The removal of the boilers, which delivered the hot water and heating for the school's main three storey building, the sixth form centre and two additional blocks, had been budgeted into the school's plans since earlier in the year

and the work was scheduled and completed during the extended summer holiday period.

SMS were already familiar with the school's systems having resolved the problem of significant gas leaks in the underground pipes the previous year, 2018. This was a major problem and one, that if it was not resolved safely and swiftly, would prevent the school from opening at the start of the new school year in September. "It was a real shock to learn about the gas leaks and such was the extent of the remedial work required that the school was forced to apply to the Department of Education for emergency funding;" explained Vucic.

Glenn Nicholls, Service Manager, SMS, explains more; " My first knowledge of this problem was on the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2018, I looked at it and designed pipe sizes, routes etc and got a quote to the school by 3<sup>rd</sup>. We started work on the 9<sup>th</sup> August and the job took 2 men x 12 days to complete. All existing underground pipework was disconnected and left in situ. Then, new surface mounted 89mm, 54mm and 42mm stainless steel pipework totalling 180 meters in length, was installed to pick up existing services. We also had to employ ground workers to dig up 6 meters of driveway for an external section and then make good to a tarmac finish."

The school secured £40k worth of emergency funding to cover the costs of the unexpected gas problem and the replacement of a leaking calorifier, and both aspects of the programme were completed on time and on budget, much to the relief of the school's management team. "SMS saved the day. It feels like a real partnership working with their team who are always professional, highly skilled and are always looking to find the best solution for the school, one that not only works but also gives us value for money;" concluded Vucic.

Martyn Neves, Operations Manager at SMS, said; "We are delighted that we have been able to establish and maintain such a longstanding relationship with the team at Herschel Grammar School. We will continue with our maintenance contract for the school and next on the list, in addition to the boilers, is the maintenance 51 fan convector units located across the school, as well as the electric water heater and the water treatment facility.

"With so many schools facing the triple challenge of aging building stock, ever decreasing budgets and a growing demand for greater energy efficiency, companies

with the experience and expertise of the SMS team are a vital support for any school's management team;" said Vucic.

## **Background**

Southern Maintenance Solutions UK Ltd was founded in 1995 and since then has established itself as one of the leading providers of commercial heating, cooling and air handling installation and maintenance services in South East England. It has had success in both the private and state education sectors, but also has long standing maintenance agreements with a range of commercial property managers for premises including various places of worship, modern gym facilities and office/manufacturing buildings.

In addition to its core activities, engineers at the company are also qualified to handle the installation and maintenance of a range of complimentary systems including electrical systems, water treatment, commercial kitchens and commercial pipework installation. The company recognises the need to invest in its staff and currently has three apprentices working towards industry recognised qualifications.

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