



The oldest and newest buildings at Leighton Park School & the refurbished gym boiler room. High res jpegs available on request.

## **Leighton Park School put SMS at the top of the class for service and maintenance provision.**

Leighton Park School, Reading is a leading, values-led independent day and boarding school for girls and boys aged 11-18. Set in 65 acres of parkland, with 200 staff and over 500 pupils, the school's property portfolio comprises 20 commercial buildings and 32 staff residential properties. The oldest building, suitably called Old School, was built in 1860 and is home to the beautiful school library, whilst the most recent is the 2019 Michael Malnick Centre for Music and Media.

SMS started working with Alan Rumney, Estates Manager, in 2013. At this stage, the work was limited to just the servicing and maintenance of the heating systems. This has now evolved and expanded to include 24/7 breakdown response and servicing of all the gas appliances, annual gas safety checks for the heating systems and specialist requirements for the science department gas supplies. It also incorporates the servicing and maintenance of all the air handling and air conditioning systems, breakdown and annual servicing of the building management systems along with, project management and installation of mechanical systems.

Echoing the Quaker values on which the school is based, Alan places a high value on honesty within any working relationship. "It is important to build a working relationship where both parties feel they can discuss works openly. This nurtures a feeling of inclusion with our outside contractor support network, of which SMS is a key part," said Alan. There can also be specific problems when working in an education setting, as Alan explained; "These may be as simple as arranging access during the school day or far more difficult, for example when providing breakdown

cover to a boarding house when students or residents are sleeping and trying to minimise noise so as not to disturb them. We also have a music building that requires a constant temperature and humidity to keep the pianos and other instruments in perfect condition."

One of the more recent projects undertaken by the SMS team was the refurbishment of the gymnasium boiler room. This involved the removal and disposal of the old gas boilers, stripping and restoring the floor, full redecoration and installing new, wall mounted gas boilers. Not only are the new boilers considerably more efficient but it has also freed up extra space in the room.

Like all of us, Leighton Park School has had to contend with the extra restrictions and additional requirements of life during a pandemic. "Throughout the pandemic, we were aware that the school had a requirement to meet all health and safety compliance requirements, even though this was more difficult;" said Terry Tarbox, Contracts Manager at SMS. Once the Government lifted its restrictions on onsite working we were swiftly back at the school to ensure that all equipment and systems that are our responsibility were serviced, maintained and in good working order, ready for the return of the students and staff." "Their engineers were working in hot boiler rooms, wearing additional PPE to not only protect themselves but more importantly to protect the staff and employees here at the school, and they never once complained;" commented Rumney. All SMS staff working on educational sites have enhanced DBS clearance.

Recently, Leighton Park School has invested heavily in solar provision with four PV solar arrays across the park and is always looking at all options when replacing equipment. Energy efficiency is a key driver in the school's goal of achieving a more sustainable way of living and working. Regular servicing and maintenance to ensure optimum operation is a key contributor to energy savings and efficiency for a site with such a mix of systems, ranging from the older mechanically driven systems to more modern, smart, digital driven systems.

Simplicity, truth, respect, integrity, peace, equality and sustainability are the Quaker values that remain at the heart of the school. Whilst it might not be immediately obvious in the day to day operations of a heating engineer, there is no doubt that the relationship that has been established between SMS and Alan and his team,

combined with the unseen benefits that this has brought to both staff and pupils, is a true reflection of this ethos.

## **Background**

Southern Maintenance Solutions UK Ltd was founded over 30 years ago 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 of 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, 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 several apprentices working towards industry recognised qualifications.

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