Report on Site Team - Autumn 2022

Through the summer and early Autumn of 2022, the Site Team has been very busy supporting a wide range of school activities, our busy lettings programme, the outstanding programme of defects with our new builds and the current roofing project.

School activities supported during this period of reporting include the recent entrance test and various after school events. Some of the larger of these events employ all the spare time that the Site Team can find. As an example, the work to support the entrance test will begin at least a fortnight in advance. I will initially meet with the caretakers to pre-plan our work schedules and to develop a team strategy i.e., to cover all the 'who, where and when' questions. From this point onwards, every spare hour is used to move furniture across the site to areas like the Sports Hall stores. This work is largely invisible to the wider school population with the work happening quietly and out of hours. The event calendars are scoured carefully in advance to identify opportunities/issues to gain any advantage for this busy event. On the day of the event the Team will work from early in the morning, then throughout the day they will form the first line of security at the front gates, this work is stressful at times, but a friendly and helpful approach is maintained. The Site Team will be the last people to leave site at the end of the working day, but not until all assembly and exam set ups are completed for the next morning. The work to return resources to their original locations carries on in the days following the test. The single most important element to this type of work is morale, keeping team spirit high is a constant challenge, one that this Team manages to achieve consistently year after year.

The out of hours lettings calendar requires lots of planning and support. Hirers include: Barracudas, Pixie Lott Performing Arts School, several astro turf and Sports Hall hirers as well as Essex Music Services. This week alone we have 42 out of hours/external hirer events listed for support on our lettings calendar, this from a weekly operational window of 102 hours. Many of these hirers need minimal input from the Team but some of them are very labour intensive such as Barracudas, Pixie Lott and our swimming pool customers who all need high levels of cleaning and onsite support.

The School is currently midway through a large roofing project that requires constant vigilance from the Site Team. The nature of the work as it is spread across the site, means that the H&S dangers can evolve rapidly and the consequences for ignoring these issues could be serious. The Site Team liaises regularly with the roofing contractors and bring issues to the attention of the principal contractor and the contract administrator quickly. The Site Team are well represented at progress meetings, feedback is concise and effectively delivered to improve the way that we work and plan our activities. This helps to ensure our students and out of hours visitors are all kept safe.

In house Small Projects

PE storage has been an issue since the Sports Hall opened for business. Outdoor equipment cannot be stored indoors as the process of bringing it in and out of the building can mean mud and sand are trodden indoors onto the new lacquered wooden floor. A suitable outdoor structure would cost the school in the region of £15,000. A medium-term solution was found that offers cheap storage at a fraction of the cost and is flexible enough to make way for a future permanent structure when the funds become available. Various containers had their contents sorted and were then hauled across site for use by the PE Team.

New IT benching was required in P1 and V7. Just before the summer holidays, and at short notice, a simple and cheap solution was installed; One that retains the flexibility to be increased or removed as the demand in these areas changes. The work was completed quickly to allow time for the data and electrical cabling contractors to complete their work before September.

Additional works

As per usual, the School's health and safety risk assessments have been kept up to date. The fire risk assessment and the asbestos monitoring plans have been re-written. Several other risk assessments have been updated and all the School's statutory testing and servicing has been completed on its equipment and plant. The premises are a very safe and well-maintained place to work and visit.

New strategies for maintaining the premises are always being sought, strategies that are easy to adopt but can make a big difference in the way we work. One example is the Spiceworks helpdesk that teachers and support staff use to log maintenance issues. We plough through several hundred spiceworks tickets every year, yet we still have some gaps in the reporting of defects. It became apparent to me that we were not effectively utilising the eyes and ears of our cleaning team, these workers see every corner of our buildings every single day, but they do not have access to e-mail. At the beginning of the new school year, I put in place a simple system of reporting where the cleaners write down the details of any issue onto one of several dozen pre-printed forms that are located by their clocking in machine. They then hand their form to the duty caretaker before leaving work. This system has been in place since the beginning of term and so far, several dozen minor defects have been reported and remedied. The quick resolution of defects can help us nip small issues in the bud before they become more complicated and expensive repairs further down the line.

Moving forward

As we move forward into winter, we are very close to completing a significant CCTV upgrade, our roofing project moves into its next phase, and we will be embarking on some significant works to improve the quality of our astro turf. Orders have been raised for new fire doors to the staff workrooms and a significant upgrade to the footpaths at the rear of the premises has been scheduled for October Half Term. This upgrade will make the footpaths wider, to cope better with our increased School population, and will remove some age-related trip hazards along the way.

Richard Free
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