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Vinyl flooring specialist Gerflor wins top marks for school project

The Scottish Futures Trust is a national body committed to saving taxpayers' money by 'delivering the best possible value' in the public sector. So when it joined forces with Scotland's Schools for the Future programme to deliver a new generation of top class teaching facilities across the country, it was expected to find the very best products at prices the public sector could afford.

Eastwood High School in Newton Mearns, Renfrewshire, was one of the first schools to be built under the initiative and opened to pupils in August 2013. Light and airy, with classrooms wrapped around a central atrium and hub, the school is home to more than 1,200 students by day and offers a wide range of facilities for community use after hours.

With so many people passing through, architects Cooper Cromar insisted on a flooring that looked fantastic, but was supremely hard-wearing and easy to clean, as well as having excellent anti-slip properties. Ian Churcher, Architectural Technologist at Cooper Cromar, turned to international vinyl flooring specialist Gerflor. Underpinned by more than 70 years of design-led technological innovation, he knew the company could deliver to a tight brief.

He said: "We've used Gerflor before for education and fire station projects; we know the products are good stuff. They have a good colour range for designers to work with and we always find them competitive and they have very good customer service."

After consultation with the company, Ian Churcher specified from the Tarasafe™ range of specialist slip-resistant vinyl safety flooring. Inlaid with mineral crystals for a light, bright appearance, and with a tough PVC wearlayer, it is also impregnated with Sanosol® fungistatic and bacteriostatic treatment for optimum hygiene and easy maintenance. As the crystals are made of mineral, rather than using the Carborundum particle, Tarasafe™ is 100 per cent recyclable, which was a positive factor in the project acquiring BREEAM certification. And because the mineral crystals make Tarasafe™ weigh less than before, it is faster to fit, while knife blades stay sharper for longer.

Having chosen Tarasafe™ Style in caviar and Tarasafe™ Ultra in pebble and granite for the majority of the school, Ian Churcher had two final considerations. He explained: "There are no suspended ceilings in the classrooms, just the exposed concrete slabs with the lights suspended below. Suspended ceilings hide a multitude of sins, but they also suppress noise. Therefore rooms above teaching spaces below had to be upgraded with acoustic flooring to minimise disruption from people walking or tapping feet.

Gerflor provided the answer. As well as its hard-wearing safety qualities, Tarasafe Ultra Comfort is a specialist acoustic product with VHD closed cell foam backing giving up to 16dB of sound insulation.

Kenny Smith, Contracts Director at the long-established Hamilton-based MacGregor Flooring Company Ltd, oversaw all the installation work. He said: "Laying the acoustic flooring makes no difference to us, but it makes a big difference to the end user."

The second consideration was ease of cleaning of 9,000m² of flooring. Ian Churcher specified Gerflor's unique SparClean® treatment. Designed to form a completely smooth surface between the mineral chips, it doesn't impair the anti-slip performance, but eliminates dirt traps. Independent testing by Patrick Michael Associates shows that SparClean® pays for itself within three years with the money saved by reduced need for detergent and water. Ian Churcher said: "We specified SparClean® straightaway. We insisted because SparClean®'s whole life cost is very good and it also keeps the floor looking great."

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There were two innovative flourishes still to be pulled off with Gerflor's help. 200m² of Taraflex Sport M Evolution, suitable for most sporting and leisure activities, was laid in the drama classrooms enabling desks to be used when needed without damaging the floor, while the company's technical support unit used lasers to cut the school crest, measuring two metres by one-and-a-half, into Tarasafe as a centrepiece for the front entrance.

Flooring expert Kenny Smith has long experience of working successfully with Gerflor. He said: "I've worked with Gerflor for 25 years on everything; schools, hospitals, medical centres and libraries. They have a good range of products, competitive prices and it's good quality."

He added: "Eastwood was a relatively straightforward project. It looks fantastic and the client is extremely happy with it."

Because of the project's importance in the national school building programme, it's not only staff and pupils who are pleased with Eastwood.

Ian Churcher said: "Because this was one of the exemplar schools there was a lot of scrutiny and a great deal of political and media interest.

"People have come from all over Scotland to have a look. There was a time when it was the most visited tourist attraction in Scotland!"

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FACT SHEET:

Project: Eastwood High School, Newton Mearns, Renfrewshire.

Architect: Cooper Cromar, of Glasgow

Flooring Contractor: MacGregor Flooring Company Ltd, of Hamilton

Products used: Tarasafe Ultra, Tarasafe Style, Tarasafe Ultra Comfort and Taraflex Sport M Evolution.

Size: 9,000m²

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