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Transform Your Education Facility This Summer: Flooring Solutions for Every Space

By Wayne Andrews, Gerflor Sports & Education Key Account Manager (GBI)

Summer presents the ideal window for upgrading education environments. With reduced footfall across schools, colleges and universities, essential refurbishment projects can be planned and delivered efficiently, minimising disruption to learning and day-to-day operations. This quieter period allows estates and facilities teams to make meaningful improvements that would be difficult to achieve during term time.

It is also the perfect opportunity to address critical priorities such as student and staff safety, long-term durability and improved hygiene. As expectations around learning environments continue to evolve, summer refurbishments enable institutions to ensure their facilities not only meet operational demands but also align with the latest Department for Education (DfE) guidance and best practice standards.

Flooring plays a vital role in how education spaces perform, both practically and aesthetically. From high traffic corridors and classrooms to specialist science labs, workshops and sports halls, every area presents its own unique challenges. The right flooring solution can enhance safety through slip resistance, support wellbeing through acoustics and comfort, and withstand the daily wear of intensive use.

By selecting the most appropriate materials for each specific space and location, education facilities can be future proofed, reducing maintenance costs, supporting compliance, and creating environments that are fit for purpose long after the new academic year begins.

Why Summer is the Best Time to Upgrade Education Spaces

Refurbishment works within live education environments can be complex, requiring careful planning to balance safety, access and continuity of learning. The summer holiday period offers a clear advantage, creating a valuable window in which more substantial projects such as corridor upgrades, sports hall installations or wet area refurbishments can be completed efficiently and safely, without disrupting staff or students.

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With sites quieter and access less restricted, contractors can work more flexibly, allowing projects to progress at pace and reducing the risk of delays caused by phased working or out of hours restrictions. This not only shortens programme times but can also deliver cost efficiencies and a higher-quality finish.

Crucially, the summer break allows estates and facilities teams to take a more strategic, long-term view of their spaces. Rather than simply replacing like for like, it provides the opportunity to assess whether existing flooring solutions still meet current expectations and standards, particularly around slip resistance, hygiene, durability and whole life performance. High traffic areas, wet environments and multi use spaces all place different demands on flooring, and ageing materials can present increased maintenance burdens or compliance risks if left unaddressed.

Advances in flooring technology now offer fast track installation options and readily available materials designed to support tight project timelines. These solutions enable education providers to deliver upgrades efficiently over the summer period, without compromising on quality, safety or long term performance, ensuring facilities are ready for the new academic year and resilient for years to come.

Meeting DfE Flooring Requirements

Department for Education (DfE) guidance sets clear expectations for flooring performance across education environments, ensuring spaces are safe, durable and fit for purpose throughout their lifecycle. At a high level, flooring solutions within education settings are expected to:

- **Withstand heavy footfall and rolling loads associated with daily use.**
Flooring must be robust enough to cope with continuous foot traffic and rolling loads from furniture, equipment and maintenance activities, without compromising safety or performance. Long-term durability is essential to preserve appearance and reduce the need for frequent repair or replacement.
- **Provide appropriate slip resistance, typically meeting PTV 36+ or R10/R11 standards where required.**
Flooring must deliver proven slip resistance to reduce the risk of slips and falls, particularly in areas prone to moisture or spillages such as entrances, washrooms and sports facilities. Performance should be independently tested and maintained throughout the floor's lifespan.

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- **Deliver suitable resistance to water, chemicals and contaminants, depending on the nature of the space.** In specialist environments such as laboratories, dining areas and wet rooms, flooring must resist penetration and degradation from water, cleaning agents, chemicals and other contaminants to maintain safety, hygiene and durability.
- **Be easy to clean and maintain to support hygiene and operational efficiency**
Flooring should support effective cleaning regimes, with smooth, non porous surfaces that minimise dirt traps and reduce maintenance time, helping education providers maintain high hygiene standards with minimal disruption.
- **Comply with relevant commercial use classification standards**
Products should meet recognised commercial performance classifications to ensure they are suitable for intensive, long term use in education settings, delivering reliable performance and value over their full lifecycle.

Importantly, the DfE does not prescribe a single flooring solution across all education environments. Instead, it recognises that different areas, from general classrooms and circulation spaces to wet rooms and specialist facilities place very different demands on floor performance. As a result, flooring types are defined by usage rather than aesthetics alone. This reinforces the importance of a fit for purpose approach, where flooring is carefully selected based on the specific functional, safety and compliance requirements of each individual space.

Flooring Solutions for Key Areas

Entrances, Corridors and High-Traffic Areas

These areas experience the highest levels of wear and tear and must be designed to handle constant footfall and wheeled traffic. Flooring needs to be durable, slip resistant and capable of managing dirt and moisture brought in from outside.

Barrier matting plays a vital role in reducing slip risks and lowering maintenance requirements by preventing dirt ingress. Alongside this, robust vinyl or linoleum flooring provides long-term durability and ease of cleaning. Wall protection systems and stair edgings can also help reduce damage and improve safety, particularly in busy circulation areas.

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Learning Spaces for Classrooms and Libraries

Classrooms and libraries require a balance between performance and comfort. Flooring should support acoustic control to minimise noise disruption, while also being durable enough to withstand daily use.

Linoleum, vinyl and carpet tiles are commonly used to achieve this balance, offering flexibility in design while maintaining performance. Acoustic-backed flooring and carpet tiles can help reduce impact noise, creating quieter, more focused learning environments. Colour and zoning can also be used to support engagement and navigation within the space.

Sports and Activity Areas

Sports halls and multi-use spaces have highly specific performance requirements. Flooring must absorb impact, reduce the risk of injury and provide consistent performance for a wide range of activities.

These spaces typically require flooring that meets recognised sports standards, ensuring appropriate levels of shock absorption and safety. Modern sports flooring systems are designed to accommodate both sporting and non-sporting use, making them suitable for assemblies, exams and community activities as well as physical education.

Wet and Hygiene-Critical Areas

Toilets, changing rooms, kitchens and wet rooms present more demanding conditions. Flooring must perform reliably in wet environments while maintaining high levels of hygiene.

Key requirements include slip resistance, water resistance and ease of cleaning. Safety vinyl flooring is often specified in these areas, providing durable, slip-resistant surfaces that can withstand frequent cleaning. Hygienic wall cladding systems further enhance performance by creating seamless, easy-to-maintain surfaces that prevent moisture ingress and reduce the risk of bacteria build-up.

Specialist Spaces for Laboratories, IT and Server Rooms

Specialist environments require more technical flooring solutions. Laboratories demand chemical resistance and high hygiene performance, while IT and server rooms require electrostatic dissipative (ESD) flooring to protect sensitive equipment.

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In these areas, selecting the correct flooring is essential to ensure both safety and functionality. Solutions must be tailored to the specific risks and operational needs of each space, reinforcing the importance of a specification-led approach.

Creating Safer, More Inclusive Learning Environments

Flooring plays a key role in supporting both safety and inclusivity within education settings. Slip-resistant surfaces help reduce accidents, while acoustic flooring contributes to improved concentration and reduced stress levels.

Accessibility is another important consideration. The use of colour contrast and appropriate light reflectance values (LRVs) can support navigation for visually impaired users, helping to create safer and more inclusive environments. Thoughtful design choices can also support students with additional needs, contributing to more comfortable and accessible learning spaces.

A Complete Solution Approach

Taking a complete solution approach across flooring, wall protection and accessories can deliver significant benefits. By working with a single supplier, projects can achieve greater consistency in performance, design and compliance.

This approach helps simplify the specification process, ensures compatibility across products and can reduce installation complexity. It also supports long-term performance, helping to lower maintenance requirements and lifecycle costs over time.

With solutions available for every area of an education facility, from entrance matting through to specialist flooring and wall systems, a joined-up approach can deliver both practical and operational advantages.

Sustainability Considerations

Sustainability is an increasingly important factor in education refurbishment projects, particularly within the public sector. Flooring choices can contribute significantly to a building's overall environmental performance.

Many modern flooring solutions are designed with sustainability in mind, incorporating recycled and bio-based materials while offering long product lifecycles. Durable materials reduce the need for frequent replacement, helping to minimise waste and resource use over time.

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In addition, low-maintenance surfaces can reduce the need for harsh cleaning chemicals, supporting healthier indoor environments. By considering sustainability alongside performance, education facilities can align refurbishment projects with wider environmental targets.

Conclusion

Summer provides a valuable opportunity to upgrade education environments with minimal disruption. By taking a space-by-space approach and aligning with DfE guidance, facilities can ensure their flooring solutions deliver long-term performance, safety and compliance.

Every area within an education setting has unique requirements, and selecting the right materials is essential to creating environments that are durable, hygienic and fit for purpose. A well-considered flooring strategy not only enhances day-to-day operations but also supports the long-term success of the facility.

To explore how tailored flooring and wall solutions can support your next refurbishment project, speak to the Gerflor and Gradus team or discover the full range of education solutions available.

Gerflor Flooring

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