

Design External Education Facilities from the Start

In response to the demand by CABE for BSF projects to invest more in the external design elements of schools, White Horse Contractors will be showcasing its integrated design, construction and consultancy services on stand 520 at the **Building Schools Exhibition and Conference (BSEC)**.

The specialist in constructing natural grass and artificial sports surfaces for state of the art sports grounds, and the leading provider of sports facilities for the Building Schools for the Future programme is keen to emphasise the importance of incorporating external works into the early design stages of a project.

Whether designing and constructing a FIFA performance standard football pitch for the school and community, artificial turf training ground, running track, or simply a playing field, pond and reed bed or architectural landscaping, White Horse Contractors can deliver innovations by drawing on a wealth of experience spanning over 50 years and its extensive in-house capabilities.

While the current BB98 has been criticised for its lack of attention to outdoor learning and play areas, White Horse Contractors has welcomed the recently introduced minimum design standard for BSF schemes:

"It is important that good design is applied as much to the exterior areas of the education environment as it is to the school buildings themselves. By involving a specialist sportsturf contractor from the outset, an architect and lead contractor can introduce innovations that can potentially save significant cost, both in terms of time but also in terms of labour and material savings, onsite," explains Robert Donald, Managing Director of White Horse Contractors.

White Horse Contractors is able to self-deliver a full range of services. From the design stage using CAD and 3D drawings, clients are able to visualise a new project before works begin. Because White Horse Contractors owns and services all its own specialist plant and equipment, it can ensure the right machinery is onsite at the right time, with no risk of delay or unnecessary cost. Staff are fully trained to use specialist earthworks and drainage plant machinery at White Horse Contractors' own training ground.

"Because we are able to manage all aspects of a project from the conceptual stages right through to completion, our customers get a very personal service," explains Jason Douglass, Business Development Manager, "This extends to the fact that customers will deal with one point of contact throughout the entire project, instead of being passed from team to team. Meanwhile we draw expertise from all areas of the business to ensure that innovations are introduced that can add value for the customer. Additionally, White Horse Contractors' in-house capabilities to deliver natural and artificial grass sports facilities, along with Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs), means the lead contractor is able to hand the external sports pitches over to ourselves to complete, reducing the length of the supply chain and therefore retaining greater control on cost and programme."

Sedeghill School, Lewisham BSF is one example of White Horse Contractors' innovative approach that contributed to time savings that saw the design and build of a full size artificial turf pitch completed through inclement weather conditions in just 14 weeks.

The pitch built on previously unused ground adjacent to the old school playing field resulted in the reuse of materials from nearby sites. This effectively raised the ground level of the pitch, but provided a solution to both the existing uneven levels, and the challenge of removing and disposing of the excavated earth from elsewhere.

Rainwater was another challenge White Horse Contractors helped to overcome at Sedgehill School. With no means of removing storm water from the site via existing channels, White Horse Contractors completed the drainage for the artificial pitch with an attenuation system that allows water to gradually soak away.

By getting involved in the early stages of any scheme, White Horse Contractors is able to save clients time and money. This is becoming an increasingly important consideration, given the refreshed focus on the quality of all aspects of school design.