

Innovate Services completes revamp of George Abbot School's catering

The number of students using the catering facilities treble after launch

In a matter of weeks, Innovate Services, the innovative school catering operator, has launched brand new catering facilities at George Abbot School in Guildford, which has seen the number of students using the facilities at least treble following its opening after the Easter holidays.

In a bid to offer greater food choice and encourage an increase in the number of healthy meals being taken by students, Innovate has revamped facilities in three areas of the School, which currently has over 1,970 students.

All have been designed to provide an increased menu choice, including a 'World Food' concept in one building. All have introduced an environment where both students and staff can relax or socialise.

Innovate, which won Educatering's Contract Caterer of the Year, was awarded the contract with George Abbot School following a competitive tender process. Julian Seymour, Business Manager of George Abbot explains why Innovate was selected; 'Innovate stood out to us on many levels. The whole team's general enthusiasm and passion for transforming the catering business is very genuine. We also visited Weydon School in Farnham to see another Innovate site in action and were so impressed with what we saw. The quality of the food offered reflected a high street offer rather than a traditional 'school meal'. Deb Cooper, Head of School added, 'I have spoken with students and they were all very positive about the food choices and its value.'

Having been awarded the contract by George Abbot in mid-March, the team had just over two weeks to implement the refurbishment in the three serving areas. Continues Julian Seymour, 'In over a fortnight, Innovate delivered on everything they said they would. After the Easter break, our students returned and have been able to enjoy the brand new facilities. In fact, they haven't stopped talking about it! There is a new buzz in the school and both students and staff are very positive about the choice of foods available. Student numbers in the canteen have at least trebled since the launch and the number of staff using the facilities has also increased.'

The main kitchen servery is based in the Raynham building and now includes a range of hot and cold meals, Teppan Grill for freshly made stir-fries, hot chutes for 'Grab & Go' meals, plus sandwiches, Panini, salad bar and hot or cold drinks. Within the Elmslie building is a secondary site, which carries a 'World Food' concept, while the third area is within the sixth-form common room and has been redesigned with a 'coffee house' feel.

Julian Seymour noted, 'Prior to the work commencing, George Abbot School invited students to participate in an online survey so their views could be obtained on what they would like to see happen with the new catering function, in terms of the menu and the facilities. In addition, four students also took part in the interviewing panel, as part of the selection process, to provide a voice for the students.'

Danny Moloney, Executive Headteacher of George Abbot confirmed, 'George Abbot School has a high academic reputation both within the county and nationally and we felt we owed it to the students and staff to refresh the dining facilities, to bring them up to modern standards. Innovate has completely transformed all three areas into modern cafes that wouldn't look out of place on the high street. The range of food is excellent and the fact that it is freshly made here on site, every day, is an advantage. I'm pleased to say that Innovate has certainly exceeded our expectations.'

Innovate Services' spokesperson said: 'At Innovate, we don't tinker with school catering; we completely transform it. From our point of view, it's important to look at the big picture – so, as well as updating menus and choice, we also look at the space, the service, supporting technology to help reduce queues, through to making sure the signage is well positioned so students can quickly see what they want, pick it up, check out and enjoy the break with their friends. As a Surrey-based business local to George Abbot School, we are excited to be working with them in delivering a service that they can be proud of.'