

# CDG gives Whitgift School the wow factor

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A new servery area CDG designed and installed for the Whitgift School.

**Commercial kitchen design company, Catering Design Group (CDG), has completed a transformation of the catering and dining facilities at Whitgift School in South Croydon, an independent school for boys aged 10 to 18.**

CDG was recommended to the school by its caterer Chartwells, following previous collaborations on several successful independent school projects. The brief to CDG was to design and build an extension to the existing dining facility, ensuring it was in keeping with the aesthetics of the school and its historic parkland setting, whilst reflecting its reputation and high-quality offering. As part of the brief, CDG was also commissioned to create a dedicated area for staff and boarders, which would allow for an increase in capacity and enhanced dining experience.

Additionally, the wider brief also included an upgrade to the kitchen and supporting back-of-house areas, including the supply and installation of new cooking equipment, including a Rational Self Cooking Centre 101, the conversion of an existing dry store into a dedicated chilled prep area and the creation of a new, external dry store. For the dry store, CDG was briefed to think 'outside the box' to provide a creative, cost-effective solution.

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Prior to the conversion, staff were required to queue at the servery with pupils – carrying their food to a separate seating area, while boarders, who number around 110, had to take evening meals in the main dining area, designed to seat over 300. To address this, CDG created a dedicated servery area, providing what it feels is a more intimate and contemporary dining experience, which blended with the existing spaces. Furthermore, the previous staff seating area was transformed into a servery with a central self-help salad bar and soup station.

The remaining servery counters had been replaced only a few years earlier, however, the impact of the new areas was so great, that the school took the decision to refresh the main dining area in-keeping with the look and feel of the new extension. As such, the counters were re-clad and new lighting, together with decoration, were included, to open the space and make it more welcoming. CED Fabrication provided the new counters for CDG.

Across back-of-house, the dishwash area was extended and refurbished, which allowed for a more operationally efficient system to be designed. This included the installation of Meiko rack and passthrough warewashers, comprising a conveyor system and a secondary system for cutlery, glasses and hospitality. The new chilled preparation area was created with the aim of enhancing the working space, whilst providing increased preparation capacity – a key requirement of the project.

Installed refrigeration included two Foster two-door refrigerated counters, as well as an upright double refrigerated cabinet.

Following extensive research as to how to meet the dry store brief of thinking ‘outside the box’, the CDG team converted a shipping container, which was externally clad in wood to blend in with the surrounding buildings. This solution provided the school with a 50% saving compared to a previously considered option.

James Stremes, Whitgift School estates manager, commented: “We’re absolutely thrilled with what the CDG team has created for us. The addition of a separate staff servery is a fantastic bonus for staff, easing congestion at the pupil servery. We also took the opportunity to incorporate a private dining area for use with visitors to the school, and this has proved very successful. It double-hats as a meeting room too, something the school was desperately short of.

“The project did come with some challenges. The biggest issue was dealing with services to/from the building and tying it into the existing in an effective manner. Thankfully, both were overcome through careful design and planning from CDG. A number of protected trees on the land also meant that test digging during the laying of the building foundations had to be factored in to ensure the roots were not compromised.”

He further noted: “CDG and Chartwells have worked together on many successful projects and the school was keen for this to be an effective three-way partnership. Feedback has been hugely positive from staff, who are now able to get, and eat lunch in comfort. The new conveyor-fed dishwasher has brought the school into the 21st century and makes for a far more appropriate clearing system. Chartwells are also now able to tailor their offering to pupils and staff, whilst the additional store and dishwash space make for a far more efficient operation.

“CDG has been instrumental throughout this process, both from an architectural/build perspective and from fitting out. In the former area, they came up with an effective but also cost-effective design that sits perfectly within the wider school environment. They ran the design team well and ultimately delivered the project to budget and time-frame, with minimal snagging issues. On the fit-out, they worked closely with Chartwells to deliver exactly what was required, at competitive prices. CDG has

delivered an outstanding facility which has made for some very happy staff and caterers. However, most importantly, they were able to deliver the 'wow' factor to a relatively simple design."