



The school's new sports hall with its eight-metre high climbing wall

Me and my project

## Back to school



MCCARRICK CONSTRUCTION'S NEW £2.5 MILLION SPORTS HALL AT FRAMWELLGATE SCHOOL IN COUNTY DURHAM WAS AN EDUCATION IN ITSELF FOR

EX-STUDENT **GARY SINGLETON**

The sports hall has an eight metre high climbing wall, is equipped for basketball, netball, volley ball, badminton, indoor football, hockey and archery and spans 1000m<sup>2</sup> of space for the students to play and learn in. The new space was set to be four times larger than the previous facility so we had a huge project on our hands with the potential to transform the school and the community. The new sports hall also houses a gym and two teaching suites for the new PE courses.

But projects of this size are rarely straightforward. Once we were established on site, we then discovered a pumped foul main drain from the school running right through the proposed new build (not identified on any drawings). Our task was to divert it without closing the school and to allow construction to begin. So there were lots of tankers and nose pegs on standby!

As with all projects, we had to ensure no disruption to the school timetable. A few changes in design created a challenging programme notably the addition of a huge MUGA (multi use games area) adjacent the sports hall. With the programme stretched we found ourselves in the middle of the exam period and forced to juggle noisy works and client requirements for silence to ensure the pupils were

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unaffected. And that wasn't all. Prior to us starting construction on site the school campus had been identified by ecologists as a hibernation ground for Great Crested Newts. We worked alongside the ecologists throughout the project as they carried out weekly inspections around the newt barriers installed alongside the site boundary to prevent the newts being harmed by site activities.

It all worked out in the end but with exam delays, newts, unidentified sewer mains, a live school environment and a lot of tight deliveries it proved to be quite a challenge. I found myself back to school in more ways than one; I have grown professionally as a result. I am using my experience as part of my professional review in the hope of being recognised as MCIQB by the end of the year. ●

When I left Framwellgate School in Durham in 1996 to start my joinery apprenticeship with McCarrick Construction, I didn't think I would be returning to the school decades later to coordinate a project like this.

The old sports hall had seen better days and it was our brief to create a modern building equipped to handle the varied sporting curriculum on offer today. It was certainly a challenge but I was keen to take the project on and build something special for future students to enjoy.

The building was scheduled to be completed within the grounds of the academy, within a live school environment, which presented both safety concerns and logistical challenges for me and the team. On top of this, the existing sports hall was still being used daily by the school throughout the construction phase of the new build, right up to the week of handover.



Creating new sporting facilities at the school

