



# Commercial Glazing in the Education Sector

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## ***Reflecting on recent times...***

Economic and political instability have been and continue to be common themes at the moment. Last year was a turbulent time for many sectors across the country – one of those being **construction** – and this year's **COVID-19** outbreak is changing not only this industry but the wider landscape even more, across **business, education and healthcare**.

One of the biggest challenges we've noticed in 2019 and 2020 – both in and out of the **education sector** – is that maintenance, despite being crucial to the functionality of a building's components, is **often overlooked**.

It's probably because they rarely fail, that the importance of **commercial windows and doors maintenance** is so frequently forgotten about or underrated. And the fact that they generally represent purely a functional element of a building – that people simply walk or look through – commonly sees their **upkeep** pushed down the priority list.

All too often, it's only when things go wrong that an installation's condition is truly considered – and this is usually at a time when it is **needed the most**.

In truth, this isn't a trend which is entirely new, but the number of enquiries we've seen from **schools, colleges and universities** about the **importance** of a **planned preventative maintenance (PPM)** plan, has rocketed. So, that's why we believe that now, more than ever, is the time to adopt a new mindset.

## ***The benefits of regular servicing***

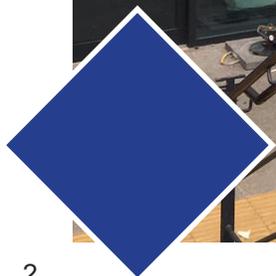
We like to give the analogy of a car when it comes to **maintenance in education**. People wouldn't dream of driving their car if it hadn't been serviced or passed its MOT – nor would it be legal – and the same should ring true with **windows and doors**. All moving parts, whether of an automotive, technical or glazing nature, have a life expectancy. That means they need **regular checks** to ensure they're working to the high standard required, and that they continue to do so.

In the world of **education**, this is not only vital for the **security** of the building but also for the **safety** of the **staff and students**. Also, if institutions don't keep up to date with maintaining their glazing components, they're likely to lose money – having to pay out for costly replacement jobs which could have been **prevented**.

Sometimes, issues simply arise with **aluminium windows and doors** due to wear and tear – which is completely normal – but it's when problems with glazing can be traced back to the procurement of equipment, that it draws attention to the bigger elephant in the room.

## ***Not prioritising quality over price***

In fact, another trend we noted last year was that although the **refurbishment, maintenance and improvement (RMI)** market was thriving, our maintenance needs weren't necessarily always required, due to the change in economic conditions. Sometimes the sub-contracting market's procurement





strategies were swayed by low pricing – and a number of the jobs our engineers have been called out to were as a result of this.

There's no denying that the **financial strain** felt across the sector has had an effect on the purchasing decisions of many **industry professionals**, when looking to source their materials for **education projects**. In other words, there's been an increased focus on price and less consideration and attention given to **quality**, and that's when we've had to wade in and **rectify legacy issues**.

But it's not all doom and gloom. One **encouraging trend** we've observed is that an increasing number of both public and private sector premises have brought building maintenance closer to the top of their agendas. And, this appears to be a **big focus** due to more sites looking to adopt a more **sustainable** and **cost-effective** building maintenance strategy.



## ***The increased adoption of drone technology***

**Technology** is at the heart of what we, as a nation, do – whether at work or home, we're living in an age of digital reliance. But as well as being convenient and quick, technology can also improve safety and offer more **cost-effectiveness** for schools.

For instance, **drones** play a pivotal role in the building survey process. They allow maintenance engineers to investigate building issues without the need to use mobile elevating work platforms – meaning inspection imagery can be received in real time, and grounds' managers are **quickly informed** of any issues which need resolving.

As a result, the duration and price of the project are both reduced – making it a much more time and cost-efficient option for the client.

This means that if **emergency repairs** need to be carried out at a peak time – or indeed, in times like these where social distancing is vitally important – information about the problem can be **diagnosed** quickly and with fewer people involved.

This, therefore, **enables maintenance teams** to devise a plan to **repair or replace** the window or door, with **greater efficiency** and minimised site disruption.

In addition, with less equipment and transport required in the **early stages of surveying**, it's an effective way of **reducing** a project's **carbon footprint**.



## Looking ahead in the education sector...

In truth, any time is the **perfect time** for **schools, colleges and universities** to devise – and stick to – a **comprehensive maintenance plan**, or at least start thinking about one. And given the upsurge in maintenance enquiries we've seen this year so far; this is likely to fast become a reality.

It's no secret that an increasing number of schools are looking to boost their **green** credentials and **futureproof** their buildings. Therefore, we'll definitely be seeing facilities management teams introducing more **energy-efficiency-enhancing** initiatives – with the aim to make their sites more environmentally and economically sustainable. And, having well-maintained glazing can play a vital role here.

## Bottom-line and environmental benefits

It's true that a maintenance budget is an organisation's way of safeguarding its bottom-line if glazing issues do occur – especially where **heating** is concerned. For example, if window seals are broken, or moisture is appearing between windowpanes, it's a sign that **valuable warmth** is being lost – and this could be **hiking up** those monthly utility bills.

This year, it's likely that the **education sector** will continue to recognise that with time and budget dedicated to maintenance, any problems will be able to be rectified by **repair or refurbishment**, as opposed to replacement. A much more **cost-effective** option.

In addition to **green commitments** ramping up, more attention should definitely be given to the project aftercare too – from both main contractors and building facilities managers.

It's in this sense that the industry should be adopting a more Germanic approach to the **procurement** and **post-project** processes. For instance, in this part of Europe, a great deal of pride is given to the sourcing of **high-quality materials** – as they recognise that this won't cause legacy issues in the long run. And this is the key to offering a service which attracts and retains clients.

While there may be more pressure placed on **budgets within education** over the coming year, it's vital that contractors don't compromise on **material quality** and, above all, identify that every building is different – in terms of its requirements, objectives and processes.

One **final thought** from me is that given maintenance provides a long-term economic benefit, as well as a priceless tool of reassurance that your building is safety optimised, why wouldn't it be high on the priority list now and well into the future?



*Thanks for reading!*

**James Sutherland**  
*Managing Director of Dortech Maintenance*



## Projects:

*“The following maintenance projects have been carried out across a variety of schools, colleges and universities throughout the length and breadth of the UK.*

*From general maintenance checks and repairs, to bigger replacement jobs, our team of engineers have worked to ensure that the safety and aesthetic of the buildings meet the highest quality standard.*

*We hope you enjoy flicking through some of the work we’ve been involved in over the past 12 months.”*

**David Hircock**

*Maintenance Manager of Dortech Maintenance.*



### Copley Primary School

**Location:** Halifax, West Yorkshire

**Site type:** Primary school



**Project overview:**

The Maintenance team repaired a damaged front curtain walling screen – caused by accidental damage.

Our engineers removed the middle section entirely and replaced with new, so that the building and students’ security were maintained.

### Burnley College

**Location:** Burnley, Lancashire

**Site type:** College



**Project overview:**

There were lots of maintenance works carried out at this site – including a mix of both repairs and replacements.

The team replaced glass panelling, investigated leaks in the curtain walling, and resealed the window louvres.

## Vita Student Glasgow

**Location:** Glasgow, Scotland

**Site type:** Student accommodation



### Project overview:

The Maintenance team carried out a host of maintenance jobs at these student apartments in Glasgow – including repairing and restoring windows.

Keen to upgrade existing installations within 43 of its rooms, Vita Student Glasgow enlisted the help of our team to modernise the units and ensure the highest safety standards for its students.

## Northwich-based College

**Location:** Northwich, Cheshire

**Site type:** College



### Project overview:

Our team used rope access to service and repair the glazing rooflights – this also included cleaning the glass units, removing horizontal transom plate/caps and applying a glass-to-glass seal.

Collectively, this reduced the amount of standing water on the rooflight and meant there would be less chance of further leaks in the future.

## North-Yorkshire-based University

**Location:** North Yorkshire

**Site type:** University



### Project overview:

There were multiple jobs carried out at this campus, such as installing new library windows and a variety of door types.

This included fire exit doors, a new steel door and frame in the boiler room, and specialist doors for the university's swimming pool building.



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to view other projects we have completed!





*If you have any questions about any of the projects you've seen or have a project of your own which you'd like to consult our team about, contact us!*

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