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KIRK HALLAM UNVEILS A BRAND NEW £1.8M INDOOR FITNESS FACILITY

Kirk Hallam Community Technology and Sports College unveiled its brand new, state-of-the-art indoor fitness facility during a grand opening on 1 March, which included an appearance and Q&A with the students by British sprint kayaker and Olympian, Tim Brabants MBE.

Kirk Hallam was originally built during the 1970s and featured a traditional gymnasium which had not undergone a refurbishment since its opening around 40 years ago. The new facility now boasts a fitness room which has been fitted with Matrix Fitness equipment, in addition to a four-court sports hall, five-a-side Astroturf pitches and four tennis courts.

The College had spent 20 years submitting failed funding bids and finally managed to secure funding through Derbyshire County Council for a four badminton court sports hall, with the possibility of a fitness room. According to Jon Blanchenot, Head of PE at Kirk Hallam, *"Having a state-of-the-art fitness room was high on our list in terms of priorities and we were determined to visit as many possible funding streams as possible in order to carry out the much-needed improvements in our indoor facilities."* The £1.8M funding for the sports hall and fitness room was provided by Derbyshire County Council, however construction of the artificial grass pitches was jointly funded by the Football Foundation and the Department for Education's Specialist Sports College Capital funding, with a total overall budget of £2.5M.

Kirk Hallam worked closely with Matrix Fitness and their architects during the early phase of the process to obtain recommendations in terms of the minimum size and the range of equipment needed. The original design submitted by Matrix formed the basis of the requirements for the tender and Matrix was awarded the contract at the end of the process.

The fitness room has been an instant success at the College. It has been exclusively fitted with equipment from Matrix Fitness which includes the G3 strength series (shoulder press, chest press, lateral pull and leg press) as well as the Functional Trainer and a selection of CV kit including the T5 treadmills, the E5x elliptical trainers, the U5x upright cycles and the H5x hybrid cycle.

"Nothing could have prepared us for the enthusiasm for the new sports facilities displayed by the students," continues Blanchenot. "We were overwhelmed by their response and it was immensely gratifying to see the instantaneous effect that the facility had on them. It is far easier to encourage students to take an active interest in health and fitness when they are able to make use of a facility like ours. I believe that by offering the highest possible quality in terms of equipment and facilities, is the greatest influence in terms of student engagement. The Matrix Fitness equipment has enabled us to bring a totally new dimension to our core PE and lessons and our extra curricular provisions. We are delighted to finally have the quality of fitness provision that has been lacking for so long at the college."

Although it has only been open for a short time, Kirk Hallam has already introduced fitness sessions for students from Years 9 – 13 both during lunchtime and after school, which regularly attracts between 20 – 30 students, as well as a session for all staff. The fitness room staff have been working hard to induct all the users and to offer them ongoing support in terms of developing their own personalised fitness programmes. Kirk Hallam has also introduced a Fitness Room option into their Key Stage 4 core PE lessons, which involves students learning about how to use the equipment and then demonstrating how to vary their usage according to their own fitness goals.

Students who had never previously attended any extra-curricular activities at the College are now regularly attending the fitness club and it is proving to be particularly popular amongst a small group of Year 11 girls, who had little enthusiasm for PE. *"Students have displayed excellent and grown-up attitudes when it comes to using the equipment productively and sensibly and have demonstrated a keen commitment to developing their fitness levels,"* concludes Blanchenot.

The fitness facilities are also available for use by the local community. Local teams and sporting clubs are able to hire different areas within the site, with the Astroturf pitches already proving to be one of the most popular new additions to the facility.

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For further information please contact Shoshana at Fuse Communications on 020 7586 9494 or email shosh@fusecommunications.co.uk

About Matrix Fitness Systems

Matrix Fitness Systems - www.matrixfitness.co.uk - is the commercial division of Johnson Health Tech UK Ltd, a supplier of a complete range of premium commercial grade cardiovascular and strength-training equipment for health clubs and other fitness facilities.