



Mary Murrell speaks to Michael Cadman



All set for the **upturn**

Business is very 'hit and miss' this year, says Michael Cadman, director of Acklam Flooring Services.

ON a positive note, Michael Cadman notices more activity on construction sites, a change from a few months ago. But business remains patchy: 'Sometimes we are really busy and feel that we could do with more fitters; then suddenly it all goes quiet.'

Middlesbrough-based Acklam Flooring Services, which recorded a turnover of £1.3m in the year to the end of March, is holding its own, according to Michael.

'I think the economy will turn round by the end of the year. The government's instructions to banks that they should start lending again are beginning to take effect.

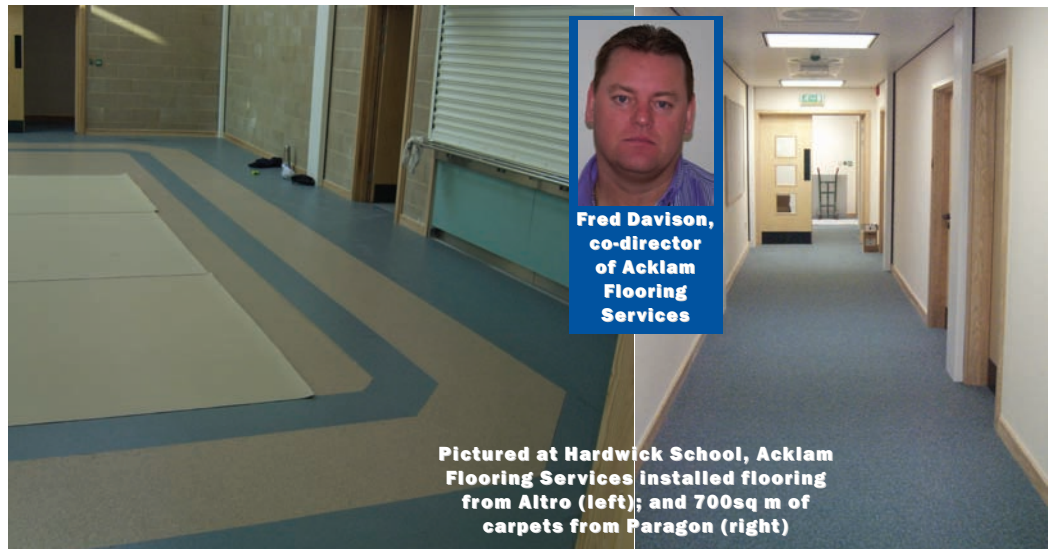
'Two or three times a week I get calls from banks asking me if I know any company that needs money.'

Michael and his co-director Fred Davison had 20 years experience as subcontractors when they set up Acklam Flooring Services in 2003.

'We were tired of working for other people,' says Michael, 'and it had always been my dream to have my own business. It was hard to get started.

'We worked from Fred's house, sent out flyers, and gradually little subbing jobs started coming in from other firms. As people got to know us, so we began to be awarded contracts direct. We are grateful to Rok, Dunelm and Interserve, all nationwide builders, which supported us.

'We enjoyed steady growth, and as a result now employ 24 people – four office staff, 16 permanently employed fitters and four apprentices. Four of the fitters have been with us since the beginning, so



Fred Davison, co-director of Acklam Flooring Services

Pictured at Hardwick School, Acklam Flooring Services installed flooring from Altro (left); and 700sq m of carpets from Paragon (right)

we have 40 years experience in the company. This is one of the reasons for our continuing success.'

The company supplies and fits carpet and carpet tiles, vinyl and linoleum. It undertakes floor preparation work including priming, screeding and laying damp proof membranes.

It installs wet rooms with welded corners including disabled adaptations. It also offers a 24 hour emergency service. It operates mainly in Durham County but will go up to the Scottish Borders.

Its customer base includes schools, hospitals, nursing homes, surgeries, pubs, hotels and shopfitters.

'Now that some schools have their own budgets that market sector is becoming very competitive, with many smaller companies operating in this field,' says Michael.

'We are not necessarily the

cheapest, but even in these difficult times some clients would rather pay a little extra to have the high quality work and service that we give.'

Those clients include the University of Teeside where Interface and Gradus carpet tiles and Tarkett linoleum were installed, Darlington Memorial Acute, Sovereign and James Cook University hospitals, Glaxo Smith Kline, schools for Middlesbrough Council and Wardell Shop Fitters.

Main suppliers are Altro, Armstrong, F Ball, Burmatex, Laybond, Marley, Polyflor and Tarkett.

The company is strong in social housing, installing or refurbishing kitchen and bathroom flooring, but like many in the industry has noticed that this work is slowing down.

'However, hospital work, predominately for vinyl and linoleum safety flooring is steady, as the government is still putting money into this sector,' says Michael.

Acklam Flooring is a CFA member. Michael says: 'It is a very good association, and I find CFJ very interesting. I always leave a copy in the kitchen so that everyone can read it,' says Michael.

'We often use CFA services for legislation, particularly with regard to H&S.

'Safety is important so I support H&S requirements and train our fitters so that they are used to working within the rules. We have

just put everyone through an asbestos awareness course.

'All our fitters have CSCS certificates and have been CRB checked, but these credentials often go unchecked on site. Consequently many small firms, which usually operate in the domestic market, and unqualified one man bands have been able to move into contract.

'We include copies of CSCS certificates in the package of information sent for each job, to reinforce the message that our people are properly trained.'

As many organisations are now taking over 60 days credit, and some even 90, Michael believes the government should enforce more strictly the Fair Payment scheme and look again at the retention system which he describes as being a nightmare.

'We simply should not have to ask for these due payments,' he says. 'The whole attitude is 'let them chase us' which is so wrong.

Companies need regular cash to pay their employees and the government should do more to help the industry.

'Despite these problems, I enjoy this trade. It's the only work I've ever known as when I left school in 1982 I started in flooring under a Manpower Services scheme. I love the job, but now I only get on my knees if we are really busy. As the building trade picks up, I expect to be doing it again!' **CFJ**

■ T: 01642 222066

■ www.acklamflooringservices.co.uk



Polyflor flooring installed by Acklam Flooring Services at Kingsway Medical Health Centre