

School FEAST is a national network of 29 centres and partnerships dedicated to training the school food workforce.

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Local Masterchef winner credits School FEAST

Laura Franklin, a School FEAST catering apprentice at the Blue School, Somerset, proved her new-found skills by winning a local Masterchef competition.



'I cooked chicken filo parcels with Chinese vegetables followed by chocolate fondant pudding. I was so nervous I was shaking. There were about 10 of us competing and, as well as cooking in front of the judges, we had to lay the table and serve them.'

'I had prepared and practised my menu several times in the School FEAST kitchen, getting feedback from the catering team. But I was still shocked and amazed when I won.'

Her Masterchef success showed Laura just how much she had learned as a result of her School FEAST training at the Blue School. As a School FEAST programme apprentice, Blue School sixth former Laura is working towards her NVQ level 2 in Professional Cookery. She's also studying maths, English and ICT and she may choose to stay on next year to complete her NVQ level 3 and gain more work experience.

Offering School FEAST training to sixth formers is the latest development in the Blue School's push to improve the quality of food for its students. This has involved a revamp of what pupils eat and where. Pupils can now choose from one of three eating areas offering a wide variety of healthy, nutritious fare.

'We were well aware of the tension between teaching our students in lessons about health and well-being and their going straight from this to buying a portion of chips, a fizzy drink and a chocolate bar,' headteacher Steve Jackson says. 'So when the catering contract came up for renewal, we saw this as an opportunity to do something about it.'

Providing School FEAST training for catering staff has been central to the revolution in school meals at the Blue School, where take-up of school meals has increased by 20% from 2008 to 2009. 'There would have been no point developing state-of-the-art school catering facilities if the catering staff didn't appreciate our aspirations and have the skills and motivation to run with the vision,' Steve says.

'The improvement in eating has definitely had an impact on the quality of learning around the school too,' says Steve. 'Afternoons are much calmer than they were.'

For Laura, School FEAST has brought great opportunities. 'I started cooking with my Nan when I was very young and I've always wanted to work in catering,' she says. 'I looked around local colleges but wasn't impressed so, when I heard about the School FEAST apprenticeship programme, I immediately signed up.'

'I'm part of the sixth form and a member of the catering team. I spend two full days in the kitchens working alongside skilled catering staff in the production kitchen and learning new skills in the School FEAST training kitchen.'

'I enjoy everything about the programme, even stacking the washing up. It's about showing you can do a good job.'

