

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

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## School FEAST nurtures budding champ

It started with an hour's washing up, just to help out. That was six years ago. Now, after completing three professional cookery courses through her local School FEAST training provider, Lorraine Wickstead has influenced an increased take-up of school lunches by 200 per cent, clinched awards for catering excellence, and has her sights set even higher.



"I was looking for something that would fit in with having young son at school, and, when my washing up job turned into an invitation to go for assistant cook, I jumped at it," said Lorraine.

Lorraine is now catering manager at Trinity and St Michael's C of E Primary School, Lancashire, where she manages two general assistants. For Lorraine, it's personal. Her team's relationship with the pupils is such that they notice things. If a child seems to be off his food, or simply choosing the same things most days, Lorraine will mention it to their parents.

"Parents know we are keeping an eye open, so they trust us and have confidence in our school meals service. It all helps increase take-up. Parents need reassurance that their child is looked after in every way, and that includes what they eat."

So what is Lorraine's experience of School FEAST and why does she attribute taking a school from take-up of 60 meals to 170 per day among 200 pupils, to the training she's enjoyed?

From menu planning, budgeting and ordering, to nutritional analysis, practical cooking skills, food health and safety and much more, the School FEAST training for Lorraine has been comprehensive.

It's also equipped her with the skills, confidence and aspiration to compete for the School Chef of the Year title, in which she has twice been local Lancashire runner up, (2007 and 2008).

Lorraine credits School FEAST as the main reason for her successful career today. "School FEAST has been a big influence in my achievements. Each time I finish a course and get a new certificate I share it with staff, pupils and parents in assembly. It's an achievement for us all and it helps continue to build confidence among them in our service.

"Without the training I've had through School FEAST, I wouldn't have had the skills to achieve the increase in take-up. In fact, I don't think I'd be in a job today."

"I'd love to become a trainer myself one day, and pass on my experience to others, but I'll have to think about that. It would be real wrench to move away from working in the school, with the children. I'd really miss them."