

School FEAST is the only training network dedicated to the school food workforce. Its courses are providing cooks, kitchen assistants, kitchen managers, lunchtime supervisors and others with practical skills and qualifications that are recognised by employers nationally. And, as thousands more around the country sign up to School FEAST training, it is increasingly being acknowledged as helping transform the quality and ensure the sustainability of the school meals service.

For more information about School FEAST please visit [www.schoolfeast.co.uk](http://www.schoolfeast.co.uk)

## From cleaning floors to training the team

A part-time cleaning job was ideal for Mandy Holden when she wanted something that would fit in once her youngest child started school. That was 10 years ago.



After moving to work in the school kitchen as general assistant, Mandy was promoted to assistant cook, but had no catering qualifications. Looking back, she describes herself as the kind of person who was quite happy to sit at the back quietly, never daring to ask questions.

Then along came School FEAST and Mandy caught the training bug.

"I had no idea I'd be where I am today," says Mandy, who has completed five School FEAST training courses, has achieved the 'Providing a Healthier School Meals award' and is keen to move into supporting other kitchen teams across the county.

"I'm at the stage now where I've trained my team. That's great for me because the more they can do, the more I am released to do more training. I can't get enough of it! I find that now I'm into it, I easily get bored and want to learn more."

Mandy started on day-release with School FEAST doing her National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 2 in Professional Cookery. This enabled her to move up to Catering Manager at Christ the King Maths and Computing College, Preston. She's particularly enjoyed meeting other caterers, seeing how others run their kitchens and sharing ideas.

"The training's been great for me, my team, the pupils and even my own family, as we eat much more healthily at home now. In school, it becomes very personal with the children and we keep an eye on their health and well-being. You get to know each one, their eating habits and preferences, and we are able to quickly spot if we think there might be a problem, which we would then pass on to their parents.

"Since improving the standards of our school food, we've noticed overall school improvements. Teachers say the pupils are much calmer after lunch since we got rid of crisps and chocolate," says Mandy. "And most teaching staff come into the dining room and have a school lunch too."

Mandy looks ahead to where her School FEAST training could yet take her. "The training has given me so much confidence and knowledge. I enjoy it so much I hope to one day be able to pass this on and become a trainer myself."

Lancashire School FEAST training and development manager Janette Mason has overseen the training of 1,770 cooks, caterers and lunchtime supervisors to date.

Janette said: "Mandy is an inspiration to us all. Not only has she embraced all the training, she has used her training to teach her family and friends, how good is that? We are educating a new generation!"

