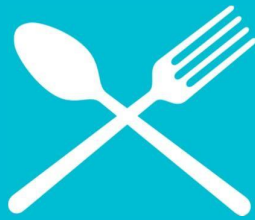




SCHOOL CATERING:
YOUR SECRET WEAPON



CONTENTS

Catering contracts.....	3
Catering facilities.....	7
Food safety inspections.....	8
Cashless payment systems.....	10



SCHOOL CATERING: YOUR SECRET WEAPON

Most schools provide some form of catering. With increasing social pressures on healthy eating, the types of meals and snacks made available in schools is ever-changing. We all want to give our students healthy tasty food comfortably within our budget. So what's the best way to do it?

Information on the link between school food, student behavior and attainment can be found at www.schoolfoodplan.com. The vast majority of catering operations now take healthy eating and other specialist dietary requirements extremely seriously. In autumn 2013 capital funding of £150m was made available for improving school kitchen and dining facilities so that every infant pupil (reception and years one and two) could get a free, nutritious school meal at lunchtime. Whilst the benefits of this scheme are undeniable, for some schools it may have implications for space planning.

THE THREE MAIN CATERING CONTRACTS ARE

- In-house school catering service
 - The school owns and manages the service
- Local authority provision
 - The school contracts with the local authority catering service
- A private sector catering provider
 - The school contracts directly with a private catering company.

For a review of the pros and cons of these alternatives see The Childrens Food Trust below. There are many different services that can be delivered by a catering contractor – vending, café bar, deli bar and full catering. The way in which hot food is provided can have a large impact on the style of a catering operation. Some rely on bought-in, multi-portion chilled or frozen hot food but these can have limitations in choice and potentially poor quality meals. The difference is evident between two competing contractors and emerges by applying the following general questions:

- How do the catering staff manage different situations?
- What is the service delivery like?
- How can you distinguish between the quality of one service and another?
- Who provides better support and why?
- Which company or organisation offers better value for money?

CATERING CONTRACTS

Knowledge of how catering contractors generate income comes from understanding the common contracts in operation. Generally, contractors earn income in two ways; through a management fee and/or retained supplier discounts. Typically their earnings from these two sources will range from 2.5% to 10% of contract turnover, depending on the size of contract. Contract turnover in this case is calculated as subsidy less a management fee plus cash sales. A management fee is the most common way for a contractor to earn income. Usually a sum is agreed annually between the client and contractor and is charged on the monthly catering trading account.



Catering contracts can take the form of either **cost plus**, **fixed fee** or **hybrid types**.

Under the cost-plus contract the client pays all the operating costs such as food, labour and sundries, plus a management fee to the contractor to supply and process these materials.

The fixed-price contract is where an annual cost of catering is agreed between parties at the commencement of the contract. The client pays equal monthly instalments to the contractor for the term of the contract. It is then the contractor's responsibility to provide the service and generate an element of profit within the total cost agreed.

Whichever contractual option is selected, ensure that all trading is transparent, retain control of the required service levels and menu tariffs, and benchmark costs. Allow 17 weeks for the competitive tendering process to cover:

- Specification of services
- Preparation of the tender document
- Pre-qualification process
- Contractors survey site
- Visits to contractors' sites
- Evaluation of written documents
- Presentations
- Negotiation of the contract

Note: Choose an output rather than an input type of specification which specifies each service required without pre-empting the food/service offered, whilst also eliciting bespoke responses from the contractors and thus identifies how they would approach the contract. This process will help to differentiate between contractors and facilitate a decision on who should be awarded the contract.

In evaluating the written and financial response it's important to construct an objective way to evaluate tenders to identify which is the best option. The simplest way is to break down the elements of the document into the component parts of;

- Food
- Labour
- Management fee
- Miscellaneous

One of the most efficient ways of determining the terms and conditions is to adapt the contractor's standard contract.

Once the contract has been awarded and the mobilisation process is complete, it is important that the catering service is monitored to ensure that the service reflects the specification both in quality and financial performance. This is best achieved through quarterly reviews using Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These are formed from the catering specification and can then be linked to any incentive scheme negotiated at the time of tendering. There are many areas that need to be monitored; from risk-assessment of equipment to ensuring that the premises are registered with the local council.



Every customers will find template contracts for outsourced catering within the Contracts module and will have the tools to set up KPI review dates as recurring activities, as well as receiving automatic alerts and a visual countdown to contract end and notification periods.

There are regional and national specialist school catering contractors. Regional contractors would generally serve an area the size of the south east of England or the Midlands. In general, when choosing a contractor based on size there can be an expectation that the medium-sized players aim to provide benefits of resource availability and a personalised service. The larger contractors provide the greatest depth of resource and range of support services, while the smaller contractors feature the highest commitment to a tailored service.

Search online for local authority model standard terms and conditions for catering contracts. Clauses should cover:

- General provisions
- Financial arrangements
- Staffing
- Control of the contract
- Insurance and liability
- Terminating the contract
- Dealing with disputes
- Statutory obligations and regulations
- Other specific contract conditions

Whether school catering is provided in-house, by the local authority or by a private contractor, the premises manager will need to monitor compliance with food safety, hygiene and other regulations related to the following:

- Health and safety guidance
 - E.g. Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1992
- Food safety and hygiene
 - Food Safety Act 1990 and Food Hygiene Regulations
- The selection and authorisation of suppliers, product traceability and ingredient specification and declaration
- Nutrition and healthy eating
- Staffing and personnel



Amongst the recommendations made for school leaders in The School Food Plan are the following which relate to environment, student social interaction and getting the contract right:

- Look around your dining hall. Is the room clean and attractive? Does it smell good?
- Keep queuing times short; try staggering lunch breaks, introducing more service points, serving food at the table, family-style, and reducing choice.
- Have a cashless payment system. This shortens queuing times, enables parents to go online to see what their children are eating, and prevents FSM children being stigmatised.

- Replace prison-style trays with proper crockery.
- Have a stay-on-site rule for break and lunch time.
- Allow all children to sit together – do not segregate those with packed lunches.
- Structure the lunch break so there is sufficient time for eating as well as for activities or clubs. This may result in the lunch break being longer or timing the clubs differently.
- Give special consideration to the youngest children at secondary schools, who might be intimidated by the noise and rush of lunch break.
- Do not draw up a new contract alone – many other schools have done this before you, and found ways to get a good deal. Use an expert or experienced colleague to help you draft it.
- Ask your caterer to draw up a clear written plan for increasing take-up over a set period.
- Make it a contractual requirement for your caterer to achieve a certain standard of quality, as judged by an external organisation such as the Food for Life Partnership or Children’s Food Trust.
- Get specialist help. For details of organisations that can help you with contracts, cookery lessons or any other aspects of catering go to www.schoolfoodplan.com.

CATERING FACILITIES

Some schools do not have **kitchen facilities for the preparation of hot meals**, whilst others act as a catering centre providing meals for a number of surrounding schools. Because of this, the range of possible floor areas needed varies widely. Design and space planning information can be obtained from The RIBA www.architecture.com and DoE Building Bulletins 98 and 99. The kitchen area must include: facilities for preparing food and drink and for washing up afterwards. Where the kitchen is used to prepare hot food for pupils, it should also include:

- Adequate facilities and enough space to safely prepare and cook food
- Facilities for catering staff, including changing areas, toilets and a chef’s office
- Separate facilities for storing cleaning materials in accordance with COSHH regulations
- Separate secure storage for dry goods
- Refrigerated and freezer cabinets or rooms
- Adequate circulation for goods in and waste out
- Further space will be required for a serving area

The size of the core preparation area will depend on the equipment needed. In turn, this will depend on the type of preparation system to be used; from traditional, cook-chill or pre-prepared food, as well as the effective number of sittings. Specialist advice from a kitchen designer should be sought early on in the project to ensure that the space allocated is sufficient, appropriately shaped and located.

Staggered lunches with up to four starting times are common. Dining rooms may be dedicated or dual purpose. Dual purpose rooms require adjacent storage for the dining tables and chairs, and they cannot be fully timetabled because of the time required to set out and clear away furniture.

The planned maintenance regime for school premises and facilities will need to make provision for periodic deep cleaning of kitchens, annual inspections of ventilation ductwork and the servicing and replacement of catering appliances and equipment. A further consideration is the efficient and safe movement within the grounds of food and waste delivery vehicles.



FOOD SAFETY INSPECTIONS

Food premises are required to be registered with the local authority and are inspected by environmental health officers to ensure that the food they prepare and sell is safe. During the visit an officer may;

- Look at the condition and layout of all of the food rooms
- Check the temperature of foods
- Watch how food is prepared
- Ask the staff questions relating to food handling practices and procedures

Inspectors will also want to check paperwork such as:

- Hazard analysis documents
- Suppliers' invoices
- Temperature records
- Cleaning schedules
- Refuse contracts
- Pest control records

Food safety inspections assess the following:

- Food hygiene – contamination risks, personal hygiene, temperature control
- Premises and cleaning – cleaning, maintenance
- Food safety management – hazards to food, allergies (see Food Standards Agency)
- Kitchen health, safety and welfare – uncontrolled hazards

Inadequate awareness of good hygiene practice in the preparation of food can lead to the spread of a number of problems. The predominant types of food poisoning include salmonella, E.coli, campylobacter and dysentery. Food poisoning occurs when food contaminated with sufficiently high numbers of bacteria, viruses or chemicals is consumed. Most food poisoning is caused by bacterial contamination. This can come from a variety of sources including people, raw food and pests such as flies, rats, mice and cockroaches. Food poisoning bacteria can also be found in dirt and dust. Areas in which food is consumed should be kept in a clean and hygienic state. This can pose particular problems in the case of 'multi-use' eating areas commonly found in schools. Many school canteens are also used as school halls, drama studios or theatre stages as well as venues for holding indoor PE lessons. Such arrangements are clearly not ideal as a food hygiene risks are higher in these circumstances.

In any school area or situation in which food is prepared or served, adequate safety arrangements should be in place with regard to the following:

- [Food safety risk assessments and related control measures](#)
 - [Safe storage, handling, preparation and serving of food \(TES Foundation customers will find a template risk assessment they can use in their online Guidance Library\)](#)
- [Food preparation and serving environment](#)
 - [This relates to accommodation, fixtures/fittings, flooring, surfaces, windows, ventilation](#)
- [Cleaning routines](#)
- [Hygiene and infection control](#)
- [Staff training](#)
- [Equipment safety](#)
- [Control of hazardous substances](#)
- [Gas and electrical safety](#)
- [Fire safety](#)
- [Pupil supervision](#)
- [First aid and emergency procedures](#)

We recommended that schools set up all documentation, with review dates, and activity completion alerts within the Activities section of Every. This will provide you with:

1. [A full audit trail to show that checks/activities have been completed](#)
2. [The peace of mind of knowing any uncompleted checks or activities will be flagged](#)
3. [Full and up-to-date legislation library so that all staff \(including temporary staff or staff who are covering for more senior colleagues\) know what needs doing when](#)

The Issues section of Every can be used to log, progress and report on any faults, hazards or other issues that are detected. We provide you with a full audit record for food safety or other inspectors.

CASHLESS PAYMENT SYSTEMS

More schools are choosing to use **cashless systems** in order to improve their cafeteria service. There are both pros and cons for using this service. The systems can be costly and it's important to do your research before making an investment. The benefits include:

- Faster service and less queuing time, enabling more efficiency and more time for pupils to pursue other activities
- Free school meals are made anonymous and more comfortable
- No need for students to carry cash in school
- Money provided by parents to pay for school meals is used only for that purpose
- Parents, carers, pupils and staff have further nutrition and food choice information

- Payments for school meals are made easier by using cheques or wall mounted coin and note loaders
- Improved efficiency of information flow and administration systems
- Provides accurate data to inform of performance indicators for school lunch uptake
- Informs budget and service planning procedures

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Lead Association for Catering in Education represents professionals in the School Food Industry. Find out more at www.laca.co.uk.

The national charity protects every child's right to eat better. Go to www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk.

The School Food Matters mission is to ensure that every child enjoys fresh sustainable food at school and receives education on where their food comes from. See www.schoolfoodmatters.com.

The Food for Life Partnership is a network of schools and communities across England committed to transforming food culture. Go to www.foodforlife.org.uk.

The Food Standards Agency is responsible for food safety and hygiene across the UK. Find out more at www.food.gov.uk.

