



Celebrating our success at the LACA Awards 2023



FM's fabulous staff and clients made it a night to remember at the annual LACA Yorkshire and Humberside Excellence Awards in Harrogate this October, coming away as winners in each of the categories we entered.

School Catering Team of the Year - Primary Co-op Academy Penny Oaks



(L to R: FM's Stephanie Walker, Paula Garner, Michelle Khambhaita and Regional Director for West Yorkshire, Karine Hendley)

Co-op Academy Penny Oaks (formerly St Mary's and St Peter's Catholic Primary School) submitted an entry for the "LACA School Catering Team of the Year – Primary Award", which was packed full of evidence showcasing the passionate commitment of Paula Garner and her catering team, and how they work closely with the headteacher, Michelle Khambhaita in promoting inclusivity, celebrating diversity and engaging with the community.

They wowed the judges with both the quantity and quality of the activities that were taking place within school. One example was a successful initiative to help new Nigerian pupils settle into school life. After seeing the children weren't taking the meals they were entitled to, the team organised Ready Steady Cook style sessions where the parents and children created dishes that were then fully integrated into the school menu for everyone to enjoy.

Our catering team have certainly used the power of food to help bring people in the school community together. They called upon the treasure trove of cultural expertise in school (where 18 nationalities are represented) to create some fantastic themed events, with not only special menus but also where children had the chance to try their hand at African drumming and bhangra dancing etc.

Another very popular initiative "Dance and Dine" which was created with school to develop community links and promote the school's health and wellbeing agenda, has attendees doing an hour of exercise, (often dancing), followed by Paula providing everyone with a delicious meal. Paula also conducts cooking sessions for students, teaching age-appropriate cooking skills and promoting nutrition and a healthy lifestyle. And because of the school's partnership with Rethink Food to reduce food waste and provide fresh ingredients to families, Paula runs cooking sessions for parents using these ingredients, with everyone coming together at the end to eat, and celebrate the new skills they have learnt. School staff have also joined the fun, when Paula hosted a 'Cook Off' competition to promote creativity and teamwork during one of their staff training days.

The ingredients for all this amazing activity in school come from a variety of sources, and one is from within school itself. On top of everything else, the school also has a hydroponics system (that supercharges the growth of vegetables / herbs in a soil free and very resource efficient way) and flower gardens where children grow herbs and vegetables for school meals, promoting a sense of ownership, environmental awareness, and sustainability. Click below to see a copy of the full winning submission.

[Click here for the full submission](#)



Shining Star Award Anne Jepson



(L to R: Anne Jepson, Simon Wade, FM's Stephanie Walker and Kirsty Dwyer)

Anne was successful in gaining this award thanks to her being a caterer that, despite always having a lot on her plate, is consistently able to deal with the many and varied demands put upon her in a calm, efficient and professional way. And while some colleagues have described her a legend in her own lunchtime, to Anne with her diligent and unassuming nature, it is just business to be dealt with to the best of her ability.

Anne is responsible for the meals at Beckfoot, a large secondary school, at Hazelbeck a co-located secondary special school, and at Priestthorpe - a local primary

receiving a hot delivered meal service. It is not by chance that she has been entrusted with managing key sites at FM's largest multi academy trust client. Whether dealing with the relatively easy provision of menus from a 3 week menu cycle, or with irregular activities such as theme days and schools hospitality requests, they are managed in the same highly efficient way. Hospitality requirements at the Trust HQ can be frequent and on occasion daunting (for some) such as for example in the case of their annual trust meeting where up to 1000 members of staff, needed to be provided with breakfast, lunch, tea and coffees. But again Anne took this in her stride.

Such is the confidence in Anne's competence, that she has now firmly established her schools as the initial test bed for a series of FM initiatives, from the food trials for our brand new products through to the introduction of our new vegan dishes, and the ongoing sampling sessions for our street food concepts. Other chef manager colleagues come along to observe (or sometimes participate in) the trial, sampling sessions, SNAG or wider school presentation etc taking place, and then take away that learning experience and cascade it on at their own school site. Click below to see a copy of the full submission.

[Click here for the full submission](#)

Supportive Head Teacher Award Miriam Lord Community Primary School

In the "Supportive Head Teacher Award" it was quite the surprise for Mr Harrison at Miriam Lord to discover that he had won, as he wasn't initially aware of the submission. It was done by a member of FM's catering team in appreciation of the very happy and supportive environment created by Mr Harrison in school.

The entry outlines how Mr Harrison is a firm believer in the importance of children receive a healthy, nutritious meal when at school, given the link between a healthy, balanced diet and children's educational attainment. The way in which he so regularly is an active and visible advocate within the dining hall for making the right choices has helped significantly in reinforcing the message to his pupils.

The value Mr Harrison puts on the catering service within school continues to be shown in so many ways, from the strong financial investments made into the school kitchen right through to the daily positive interactions with the members of the team. The catering team wanted to show how massively they appreciated all his support, and it was great to see that the judges also concluded that Mr Harrison was a worthy winner of the Supportive Head Teacher Award. Click below to see a copy of the full winning submission.

[Click here for the full submission](#)



(L to R: FM's Amanda Wagstaff, Bryan Harrison, Jo Bromley and FM's Samantha Davey)

Special Recognition

Reevy Hill Primary School

Reevy Hill Primary School also submitted an entry in the Primary School Catering Team of the Year category that focused on the huge amounts of fun that the catering team manage to pack into lunchtimes at Reevy Hill.

Whilst they didn't win an award on this occasion, the pupils at Reevy Hill certainly hit the jackpot every day in having such an excellent team who work so hard to make their lunchtime experience so special.

Head Teacher Gary Stott summed it up brilliantly in his supporting summary in the submission when he said:

"The kitchen team at Reevy are an amazing bunch of hardworking ladies. Daily, their smiley faces and relationships with our children mean lunchtime has a lovely family feel. They always go the extra mile for our children throughout the year with theme days. They dress up on theme days, provide a great menu choice to allow our children to taste and try new foods and decorate not only the serving hatch but the whole dining hall, meaning this is not just a theme day but an experience.

They have great relationships with staff and always discuss what's best for our children and what they can do to be involved in school life. The team have worked with us and the children to rename the dining hall.

In 18 years of working in Bradford schools, they are by far, the best FM kitchen I have ever worked with - a credit to FM"

Click here below to see a copy of the full winning submission.

[Click here for the full submission](#)



(L to R: Jeanette Sharp, Tracy Williams, Gary Stott, Stacy Barnes, and Hemini Patel)

Here's some more photo's from the night:

