



Meet
LEANNE TURK

Getting creative with Chartwells

Our school catering provider Chartwells are taking their commitment to teaching young people how to live healthily to a whole new level.

They opened up their new 'Creative Kitchen' in Hounslow earlier this year, where their Training and Development Chef Leanne Turk told Ben Nielsen about her week.

MONDAY 

A big part of my job is spending days in primary schools teaching children the importance of healthy eating and exercise.

Our main message is covering the eatwell plate, which teaches about the food groups. We also tackle hydration, and a particularly important issue: hidden sugars.

It's not just about eating. How you treat your body is just as important as what you put into it, so we have a fun 10 minute exercise session we call "heart to heel." The children, myself, and the teachers run on the spot for 10 seconds and see how our heart beats faster through exercise, then hopping and star jumps around the school hall or playground- the star jumps are a particularly huge hit!

TUESDAY 

We provide menus, and food, for schools in the Hounslow area at our Central Production Unit, which is in the same building as the Creative Kitchen. I like to spend a day to help develop the menu.

Some of our schools have their own kitchens, but we provide a lot of schools with meals that they can heat up on site as they don't have room. It's important to us, and our clients, that we keep our school meals fresh, nutritious, and tasty.

WEDNESDAY 

Our taster sessions are a great way to get kids trying new foods. We use "food superheroes" in our menus to let kids think about the benefits of fruit and veg - maybe the nutrition will give them super powers!

It really helps our clients if we can support them with their curriculum. I went to a school where they were studying Asia in year 6, so I took in some traditional Asian ingredients including the Lotus root, rice noodles and all the spices that make up garam masala. Introducing the children to food they have not seen before and using their senses to learn is really rewarding.

THURSDAY 

The Creative Kitchen is open to local schools for interactive and educational sessions! It's a fantastic new learning facility with a training kitchen and tutorial seminar classroom to support our clients, teaching basic cooking and nutrition as part of the national curriculum.

I have developed all of these sessions, like a bread making workshop, pizza making, and a 5 a day workshop, so the children can get creative and take part. Seeing them develop new skills, get excited about new ingredients and bring their ideas to life is the best part of my role and is a great way to get ready for the weekend!

FRIDAY 

Providing healthy and nutritional meals to young people is something here at Chartwells we deliver with pride and passion. As the leading provider of primary school meals in the UK, we take our responsibility for cooking for children very seriously.

During taster sessions I encourage children to try new ingredients and flavours. At a recent session I got 204 out of 210 pupils to try a fruit or vegetable they hadn't eaten before. As a result of this session we've introduced new vegetables to our salad bars, like mouli and radishes. Getting key stage 1 to try new foods can be really challenging, so I'm really proud of this!

