



**Deptford Park Primary School** is a large and expanding primary school. We have a large number of pupils for whom English is not their first language and a high percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals.

In 2009 the borough wide catering contract came up for renewal and a number of Lewisham Schools decided to opt out of this contract. These schools operated their own collaborative (or federation) to share best practice and resources on many matters. Two collaboratives plus a school acting on its own decided to join forces and appoint Educo to assist the tendering and awarding of a new catering contract which Educo would thereafter help contract manage.

Although Educo work in many different ways with schools, in order to support the Lewisham collaboratives, Educo's approach to improving the quality and financial performance of the school meal catering was based around a three step interlinked process:-

- A clear specification of the catering service required by each individual school to ensure the right bespoke service.
- A thorough, competitive and OJEU compliant tender process to award the catering contract to a relevant, commercial catering company. Educo ensure the school is fully protected by the adoption of the Educo catering contract, setting out the relationship between the school and the catering contractor to ensure best practice for food delivery, service and financial procedures.
- Thereafter the partnership between the school, Educo and the caterer is ongoing with regular meetings to evaluate the meal and service developments for the duration of the catering contract. Educo also undertakes a monthly assessment of the school catering contract and regular on site audits of the service with follow up action plans to ensure the catering service remains alive, relevant and keeping well ahead of developing best practice.

Following a fully compliant tender the schools decided to award the contract to a single catering contractor, albeit that each school has its own bespoke catering contract, service and Food for Life compliant menu suitable to its unique needs.

The catering contract was awarded for an initial three years and has subsequently been rolled over for a further three years. At the outset of the contract, given the relatively low historic meal take up across the schools, challenging budgets and objectives were set for the new caterer.

Upon awarding the new catering contract the kitchens had previously suffered from under investment and the staff were poorly trained and lacking motivation. The school, Educo and the new



caterer operating under TUPE legislation sought to upgrade the skills of our catering staff, developing craft and cooking skills. This was not always easy and there was sometimes resistance from the incumbent staff.

However with capital investment in the catering equipment, a consistent and determined approach by the school, caterer and Educo, substantial training and ultimately the replacement of some staff who were unable to make the transition to a high performing craft based kitchen, the service has been totally enhanced.

Regular meetings between us, the Caterer and Educo have resulted in a massive increase in take up, to over 70% of school roll. The kitchens are regularly audited and Key Performance Indicators are assessed on a monthly basis. An annual improvement plan is put in place and monitored to ensure the contractual terms are satisfied in the school's favour.

The school meal menu is now a multi-choice fresh menu that is bespoke to Deptford Park and is designed to reflect the cultural background of the school.