

A professional standard for a cook

A cook works with the head of kitchen and kitchen team to prepare, cook and serve meals, snacks and other requirements. They provide support to the head of kitchen and bring the plans and recipes to fruition. The cook ensures the kitchen team work to the head of kitchen's specification to deliver the quality and content required to satisfy the customer and governance requirements. In a larger operation school cooks may be supported by either assistant cooks, catering / kitchen assistants or a combination of both. The core preparation and cooking competencies remain the same, but more responsibility will be given for training, stock and ordering, depending on the organisation. Although focussing on a school environment the knowledge, skills and behaviours will match closely with a cook in other industry sectors.

The structure of the standard

The table included in this document contains a professional standard that employers have agreed is a professional level of competence for the role of a cook in a school catering operation.

The standard is presented in three parts covering:

PART 1 Knowledge (Know it!)

PART 2 Skills (Show it!)

PART 3 Behaviours (Live it!)

Element of the standard	Knowledge (Know it!)	Skills (Show it!)	Behaviours (Live it!)
Food preparation and cooking	<p>Know the food groups used in school catering environments and their common preparation methods</p> <p>Food groups: Meat, fish, poultry, fruit and vegetables, bread, soups, sauces, rice pasta and pulses, cakes, biscuits and sponges</p> <p>Preparation and cooking methods: Preparation with a knife, mixing, combining ingredients, machine processing Boiling, poaching, baking, roasting, grilling, frying, steaming, simmering, combination cooking</p> <p>Know the importance of checking the quantity and quality of ingredients for dishes</p> <p>Know what constitutes a healthy balanced meal in line with the food based standards and guidance, how to ensure the kitchen team meet these and why this is important to pupils</p> <p>Know how to adapt, scale and follow menu / dish specifications and food standards and when suitable alternatives, such as special menus can be used to enhance the whole school approach</p>	<p>Perform food preparation tasks as required, following kitchen procedures and maintaining food safety and quality</p> <p>Food groups: Meat, fish, poultry, fruit and vegetables, bread, soups, sauces, rice pasta and pulses, cakes, biscuits and sponges</p> <p>Preparation and cooking methods: Preparation with a knife, mixing, combining ingredients, machine processing Boiling, poaching, baking, roasting, grilling, frying, steaming, simmering, combination cooking</p> <p>Ensure ingredients and commodities are of the required quality and quantity</p> <p>Ensure team prepare, cook, regenerate and serve food to keep the nutritional goodness (e.g. by not adding salt, using healthier cooking methods)</p> <p>Use menu / dish specifications and food standards to prepare the correct volume of food with adaptations as required by the consumers. Prepare, cook and serve high quality food on time and to budget</p>	<p>Create food which tastes good and keeps the nutritional goodness by best use of tools and equipment</p> <p>Instinctively work in a safe way</p> <p>Promote healthier ways of food preparation and production</p> <p>Prepare and serve a mix of familiar and new foods and encourage pupils to experiment</p> <p>Energise kitchen team to produce high quality food on time, look for opportunities to get pupils excited about food, such as themed menus during sporting events</p>

Element of the standard	Knowledge (Know it!)	Skills (Show it!)	Behaviours (Live it!)
Customers and service	Know why it is important to talk to your customers, including staff and pupils	Engage with customers when serving food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to school and pupil voice through opportunities such as school councils or School Nutrition Action Groups (SNAG) Take pride in dish presentation and see the dining experience through the eyes of a child to make sure food is appealing, appetising and tastes good Serve in an friendly and efficient manner
	Know how to present dishes for service in line with organisation's standards and requirements	Present dishes for service to organisational standard	
	Know the service style and operation in organisation	Serve food in line with organisational procedures, providing customers with information and assistance as required	
Nutrition, allergens and dietary needs	Know common food allergens and organisation's procedures for identification, preparation and service of them, including where to obtain allergy and dietary information for dishes and for customers	Ensure allergens are clearly identified during production, identify which customers have dietary requirements and how to meet them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take responsibility for allergens in the workplace and provide a discreet alternative to those with allergies or other dietary requirements Bring new ideas for techniques, ingredients and dishes to the attention of the head of kitchen Take accountability for dish composition and identification of allergens or special dietary needs
	Know common dietary and religious requirements	Adapt recipes to meet dietary and religious needs	
	Know how to adapt recipes to meet local needs	Adapt recipes to meet local needs and preferences, e.g. volume, school standards	
Health, safety and hygiene	Know the food safety practices and procedures to ensure the safe preparation, cooking, holding and service of food in line with HACCP and other legislative requirements	Prepare, cook and present food to agreed food safety practices, legislation and guidelines, ensuring a clean and hygienic kitchen environment is maintained at all times and food safety management procedures followed / recorded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put safety first and proactively manage the day to day health and safety requirements of the kitchen Encourage team members in a culture of compliance and safe working
	Know what to look for in ingredients and how to handle and store them to maintain quality, in line with food safety legislation	Ensure ingredients are stored, prepared, cooked and presented to deliver a quality product that is safe for the consumer	
	Know how to complete scheduled cleaning and inspection tasks, monitor building for defects and signs of pest infestation and corrective actions to take when issues are identified	Complete checks on work areas in line with organisational procedures, ensure team members work safely and ensure all documentation is completed accurately	

Element of the standard	Knowledge (Know it!)	Skills (Show it!)	Behaviours (Live it!)
Health, safety and hygiene (continued)	Know how to identify hazards in work area, how these are commonly rectified and where to go if further information is required	Complete inspections of work area, contributing to risk assessments and implementing safe systems of working	
Teamwork, culture and leadership	Understand how personal and team performance impacts on the successful production of dishes and menu items and the importance of training and development to maximise own performance	Work effectively, leading teams to ensure dishes produced are of high quality, delivered on time and to the standard required, develop own skills and knowledge through training and experiences	Take pride in own role through an enthusiastic and professional approach to tasks, recognise own personal growth and achievement
	Know how to communicate with, motivate and instruct colleagues and team members from a diverse range of backgrounds and cultures, how to support team members when needed and how the team ensures the catering needs of the school are met	Work efficiently with team members, giving clear instructions and support them to ensure that food is prepared to the required standard within designated timescales to quality standards	Demonstrate positive behaviours to team members to complete tasks on time, listen and respect other peoples' point of view, respond politely and promote a fair, non-discriminatory and equal working environment
	Know the procedures for reviewing the performance of staff and the benefit of, and how to access staff training and development opportunities	Give feedback to team members, through performance reviews if appropriate, in line with business requirements, act upon training needs of team members	Use feedback as an opportunity to improve performance of team and individuals, take an active interest in the development of team members
	Know how own role within school catering can positively impact on the whole school approach and why this is important to the success and achievement of the school and its pupils	Work to have a positive impact a whole school approach, developing a culture that looks outside of the kitchen to ensure a joined up school catering operation meets the needs of the school	Look for opportunities to engage with key members of own and other teams to promote whole school approach through a positive culture in the catering operation

Element of the standard	Knowledge (Know it!)	Skills (Show it!)	Behaviours (Live it!)
Stock, orders, costing and finance	<p>Know how to compile an order based on current stock levels and planned menus</p> <p>Know the procedures for stock receipt, storage and control in own organisation</p> <p>Know costs of ingredients and commodities and why they must be controlled</p> <p>Know why wastage must be minimised and how ways of working and effective stock control can achieve this</p>	<p>Complete orders for ingredients, commodities and disposable items</p> <p>Receive, check and store deliveries in an efficient manner following organisational policy</p> <p>Use ingredients and resources in line with specifications and costings</p> <p>Work in a way that minimises wastage of ingredients and resources</p>	<p>Make best use of stock ensuring team follow procedures to minimise waste</p> <p>Take responsibility for the quality and safety of ingredients and resources</p> <p>Be financially aware of the cost of ingredients, resources and wastage</p>
Safeguarding and confidentiality	<p>Know the types of sensitive data that may be required in the catering operation for pupils in the dining area and how this must be used and stored in adherence to data protection</p> <p>Know the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, how to identify and report potential safeguarding concerns</p>	<p>Receive, store and use confidential data relating to pupils within own area of responsibility</p> <p>Look out for potential safeguarding issues and report immediately in line with organisational policies and procedures</p>	<p>Take a proactive approach to safeguarding, ensuring effective on going communication with relevant parties</p>