

A professional standard for an assistant cook

An assistant cook works as part of the kitchen team, usually in larger schools and provides support to the cook and / or head of kitchen with preparation, cooking and service, as well as wider kitchen duties. The assistant cook needs to have a wide range of knowledge and skills for food types, cooking methods and dish composition. In some kitchens, kitchen assistants may also take on some of the responsibilities of the assistant cook, and many core competencies, e.g. Food Safety, run parallel across the standards. Often larger operations will have more assistant cooks, who may also deputise for the school cook when necessary. Correct completion of kitchen documentation is important to ensure legal requirements are being satisfied. The catering team will work to set standards laid out in the client's / school's food policy to meet the healthy eating and wellbeing requirements.

The structure of the standard

The table in this document contains the professional standard that employers have agreed for the role of an assistant 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	Know the food groups used in school catering environments and their common preparation methods Food groups: Meat, fish, poultry, fruit and vegetables, bread, soups, sauces, rice pasta and pulses, cakes, biscuits and sponges Preparation and cooking methods: Preparation with a knife, mixing, combining ingredients, machine processing Boiling, poaching, baking, roasting, grilling, frying, steaming, simmering, combination cooking	Perform food preparation tasks as required, following kitchen procedures and maintaining food safety and quality Food groups: Meat, fish, poultry, fruit and vegetables, bread, soups, sauces, rice pasta and pulses, cakes, biscuits and sponges Preparation and cooking methods: Preparation with a knife, mixing, combining ingredients, machine processing Boiling, poaching, baking, roasting, grilling, frying, steaming, simmering, combination cooking	Create food which tastes good and keeps the nutritional goodness by best use of tools and equipment Prepare and present food in the most appealing and attractive way Instinctively work in a safe way
	Know the importance of checking the quantity and quality of ingredients for dishes	Ensure ingredients and commodities are of the required quality and quantity	
	Know menu and dish specifications	Use menu and dish specifications to prepare dishes to meet organisational standards	
	Know how to maximise quality when cooking and packaging food for transportation	Maximise quality of food when cooking and packaging for transportation	
	Know what makes up a healthy balanced meal in line with the food based standards and guidance, and how to ensure these are met and why this is important to pupils	Prepare, cook, regenerate and serve food to keep the nutritional goodness (e.g. by not adding salt, using healthier cooking methods)	Prepare and serve a mix of familiar and new foods and encourage children to experiment

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 positively with pupils and staff when serving food	Actively seek to engage positively with pupils, school staff and parents whenever possible
	Know how to present dishes for service in line with organisation's standards and requirements	Present dishes for service to organisational standard	See the dining experience through the eyes of a child and use this perspective to make food appealing and appetising
	Know when food should be ready and how it should be served	Serve food in line with organisational procedures, providing customers with information and assistance as required	Serve in a friendly and efficient manner
Nutrition, allergens and dietary needs	Know common food allergens and the organisation's procedures for identification, preparation and service of them, and where to obtain allergy and dietary information for dishes and for customers	Ensure allergens are clearly identified during production of food, identify which customers have dietary requirements and adapt dishes accordingly to meet them	Take responsibility for allergens in the workplace and provide a discreet alternative to those with allergies or other dietary requirements
	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 legal requirements	Prepare, cook and present food to agreed food safety practices and guidelines, ensuring a clean and hygienic kitchen environment is maintained at all times and food safety management procedures are followed and recorded	Put safety at the forefront of all work tasks, embrace a clean-as-you-go approach, be proactive when identifying potential hazards, maintaining records and reporting in a timely manner Be vigilant and aware of potential risks within the kitchen environment and take action to prevent them

Element of the standard	Knowledge (Know it!)	Skills (Show it!)	Behaviours (Live it!)
Health, safety and hygiene (continued)	<p>Know what to look for in ingredients and how to handle and store them to maintain quality, in line with food safety legislation</p> <p>Know how to complete scheduled cleaning and kitchen checks, complete kitchen records e.g. cleaning schedule, temperature checks, report defects and signs of pest infestation and take corrective actions as instructed</p> <p>Know how to identify hazards in work area, how to record and address them and the potential consequences of those risks and where to go if further information is required</p>	<p>Ensure ingredients are stored, prepared, cooked and presented to deliver a quality product that is safe for the consumer</p> <p>Check work areas in line with organisational procedures, work safely and ensure all records, e.g. cleaning schedules, temperature checks, are completed accurately</p> <p>Inspect work area, undertake all tasks with due care and attention, reporting risks in the appropriate manner, rectify hazards where possible and follow safe systems of working</p>	
Teamwork and culture	<p>Understand own role within the team and the importance of training and development to maximise own performance</p> <p>Know how to communicate with 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</p>	<p>Communicate with different people using different methods in the best way for the situation, develop own skills and knowledge through training and experiences</p> <p>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</p>	<p>Take pride in own role through an enthusiastic and professional approach to tasks, welcome feedback and use it to plan ways of improving, recognise own personal growth and achievement</p> <p>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</p>

Element of the standard	Knowledge (Know it!)	Skills (Show it!)	Behaviours (Live it!)
Teamwork and culture (continued)	Know the roles, duties and responsibilities of a school cook / head of kitchen	Deputise for the school cook / head of kitchen during absence	Be proactive in learning the roles, duties and responsibilities of a school cook / head of kitchen
	Know how the catering operation supports the whole school operation, know key school staff and other stakeholders	Work with own team and school staff to provide a whole school approach to food as a vital element of school life, celebrating success and addressing challenges to deliver an excellent catering service	Live the values of the school food plan to embrace a whole school approach to food
Stock, orders and costing	Understand the basic costing and yield of dishes and effective stock control	Follow instruction to meet targets and effectively controlling ingredients and resources	Be financially aware in approach to all aspects of work
	Understand the principles of ordering, delivery, storage, stock rotation and waste management	Follow procedures regarding ordering, storage, rotation, usage and waste of ingredients and resources	Set an example to others by working in ways which minimise waste of ingredients and resources
Safeguarding and confidentiality	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	Receive, store and use confidential data relating to pupils within own area of responsibility	Take a proactive approach to safeguarding, ensuring effective on going communication with relevant parties
	Know the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, how to identify and report potential safeguarding concerns	Look out for potential safeguarding issues and report immediately in line with organisational policies and procedures	