

CATERING MARK CASE STUDY, FEBRUARY 2016

Toad Hall Nursery Group

Toad Hall operates 16 nurseries in South East England, from Milton Keynes in Buckinghamshire, to Haslemere in Surrey.

Charlotte Eavis Wix is Director of Childcare and Operations. She tells us about their Silver Catering Mark award, the background, the process and the benefits.

Why did you decide to go for the Catering Mark?

A major benefit of the Catering Mark is that its rigorous standards and on-site inspection prove you're doing what you say you're doing. Charlotte says 'We wanted to demonstrate to our parents and staff that the food we produce for the children is of a high quality and sustainably-sourced, as well as being nutritious and exciting'.

What steps did you take to ensure you were 'inspection ready'?

While a change in process can be daunting, like Toad Hall, most catering teams find the challenge pays off. 'We actually began to enjoy it! It allowed us to review our processes and ensure we only provide the highest quality meat and fish', says Charlotte. 'The paperwork was easy to understand and the evidence needed was information we already had, so it was fairly straightforward'.



How did you find the inspection itself?

'The inspector put us at ease immediately. It was great to get really positive feedback and know we were on the right track.'

Did you take up any of the training and support opportunities on offer?

'Our chefs attended the Catering Mark training before inspection and have used the information gained to help inform parents of the awards and the impact good quality food has on their children.'

What has the impact of the award been?

All involved are proud of their achievements, and this enthusiasm is infectious. '99% of our parents rate our food either good or outstanding,' says Charlotte. 'And we have been recognised in the industry for raising the profile of nutrition in Early Years.'

How about your staff?

The chefs enjoyed a day out at a farm that supplies Toad Hall's Red Tractor pork. 'They were delighted to see the pigs cared for so well' says Charlotte.

Have there been any unexpected benefits?

'We've locked down our menu so we know we're buying traceable and compliant ingredients.

We're controlling costs and developing good relationships with our suppliers.

We've also linked with other nurseries that have the award.'

Top tip

'Pull on your wellies and go and visit your suppliers. The farmers we've met are amazing and work hard to ensure we get the best!'

KEY FACTS
Silver Catering Mark award holders since June 2015
Meals served daily: 2,115 across 16 nurseries
Next steps: to go for Gold award
Most popular dishes: roast dinner and lasagne with garlic bread

