

School meal transformation at Carlton le Willows Academy sees student uptake increase to 90%

Radical transformation of service by Innovate Services reduces queuing by over two-thirds, despite tripling student uptake throughout the schooling day.

Carlton le Willows Academy, which is based in Gedling, Nottingham, is reporting significant success in the transformation of its school catering service, which has seen student meal uptake triple since it appointed Innovate Services to manage its school meals function from September. In just three months, 90% of students are today choosing to use the canteen as a result of a host of updates to the overall service.

Innovate has helped the Academy fully modernise its catering function; improving menus, as well as updating the physical dining facilities. Lunch time queues have subsequently reduced from an average of 20 minutes to just six minutes as a result of the introduction of a barcode scanning and biometric check-out process. A completely new sixth-form café has also been created, providing students with their own coffee bar where they can study, while enjoying lunch or a snack.

Kate Packham, Carlton le Willows business manager said: "Our catering service was previously local authority run and, as a dynamic and successful Academy, we knew it needed a refresh to really reflect what we are about as a school. Following a competitive tendering process, we selected Innovate Services as our catering partner as it was clear they would make a real difference. Their proposal for reducing queue times, improving take-up and even adapting the design of the dining room facilities were really impressive. Plus, the food tasting sessions, in which we involved a number of our students, were of a very high standard.

On being awarded the contract, Innovate Services refurbished the facilities during the summer holiday, in order for everything to be ready for the September term. The dedicated dining area received a complete makeover, including new furnishings, lighting and service counters, the sixth form café was created in what was previously a common room and new electronic point of sale equipment was installed to help streamline the check-out process.

The menus now include daily hot plated meals, Gino D'Acampo's Simply Fantastico pasta, stir-fries or world food that is made-to-order on a Teppan Grill, a well-stocked salad bar, Grab & Go hot snacks, sandwiches, baguettes, panini and more.

Craig Weaver, Headteacher of Carlton le Willows confirms: "Having appointed Innovate, we now feel we have a catering service that we can really be proud of. The new menus and displays have gone down really well with the students. The sixth formers love their coffee bar and we are finding more and more now stay onsite at breaks, as they say it feels more like a high street café. The range of food – and availability throughout breaks – is excellent as everything is made fresh on the day. As an example, one member of the catering team is now baking fresh goods all day and the wider team is really striving under Innovate's guidance. Take-up has significantly increased, while queue times have dropped. It really is a marvellous success story.'

A full breakfast service and after-school service has been introduced, and since launching three months ago has seen one of the highest uptakes in all of Innovate's school sites. To add to this, Innovate also provides the school with full corporate hospitality catering to support functions, such as open evenings, parent evenings and governor's receptions, and can include everything from canapés to three-course meals.

Innovate Services' spokesperson adds:- 'The modernisation of the catering at Carlton le Willows is a huge triumph. The senior leadership team, catering team and students have all embraced the change – the service is extremely busy throughout the schooling day and really goes to show just how far school catering has come. Gone are the days of menus with just one or two choices, and instead we deliver freshly made food that people would relate more to a modern retail establishment, yet it is priced for schools and delivers the balanced nutrition that is required.'