

Charlton Christian College

CASE STUDY

The nitty gritty

Name: Elwyn Bennett
Position/role: Canteen Manager
No. Students: 700
Year range: K-12
Canteen Operational Days: Mon-Fri
 (five days per week)
Number of Employees: 1 (and 8 volunteers)
Type of School: Independent

How long have you been the canteen manager?

I'm coming up to my five-year anniversary.



How did you turn the canteen around to meet the Strategy?

As Charlton College is an independent school, the canteen Strategy was not essential for us to have to comply with, but the board agreed with the concept of the Strategy and felt that this was a good time to implement it.

I had my reservations trying to implement the Strategy - I suppose that came from feeling a bit overwhelmed with what I had to do. But when I got down to the nuts and bolts of it, I really wasn't that far off compliance. I only had to tweak a few things and add a few extra Everyday items.

So, my advice to people is to just have a go. Have a go, and reach out for help if you need it.

The canteen today is nothing like when I went to school - the kids are almost spoilt for choice. My dream is that we will continue to move more and more away from nuggets and Occasional items. It was interesting - I didn't actually have to do too much. We had a fairly healthy canteen running. I've never used a fryer, or served anything deep fried. We've got a salad bar where we make freshly made salads with sandwiches and wraps.

Nuggets, chicken tenders and pies – they were really the only Occasional foods that I was stocking. So we just needed a little bit of tweaking with removing some of the slow moving Occasional foods. I increased my Everyday items and tried to work on minimising my Occasional items.

Have you seen any changes in how your canteen staff have been working?

I don't know if it's the healthy canteen or the other side of COVID-19, but we've definitely gotten busier. A lot more cooking is being done on site.



How do you promote and market Everyday food and drinks in your canteen?

We don't display any Occasional items and we run meal deals with some of our Everyday items. On the bench we only display our ham and cheese rolls, and cheese and vegemite scrolls. I'm very blessed to have a thermomix so I can make my own bread rolls – I'll often add pesto and cheese, or make pizza scrolls and things like that.

What are your personal highlights from working in the canteen?

Normally I have a history of swapping jobs because I get bored after a few years. But it's just hit me that I've been here for 5 years. Where did that go? I can only think that I must be feeling a sense of challenge, because I haven't even looked for anything else.

Does the canteen currently run any promotions?

We run new meal deals each term with some of our Everyday items. I also have a weekly gourmet salad – this week is baby spinach, pumpkin and feta. It's great to add another healthy option for the students and staff.

Do you change your menu regularly?

I change the menu every term. I also change the meal deals every term to bring a bit of interest and excitement. It's all about the demographics of the group you are catering for – my kids happen to love bolognaise, but I've had to trial lots of different things. For one term I had pasta carbonara on the menu. I trialled it, and trialled it, and trialled it – but they just didn't seem to like it. So the next term I changed it to mac and cheese and they love it. You've just got to give things a try and if it doesn't work, change it.

What feedback have you been receiving from the students?

My volunteers coming in have been very positive and embracing the changes and understanding the importance of what we are trying to do. The students are happy – they're loving the pasta bolognese, that's really popular. I've introduced mac and cheese and they love it. They can't wait to get up here and get their lunch. They also love their toasted sandwiches. I think the hardest nuts to crack are probably some of the teachers – the longer you have the old menu in your head, the harder it is to get rid of it. If they've got years of poor eating habits, it takes a while to break some of that thinking down.



Do you have any tips or advice for successfully running a healthy school canteen?

Develop good relationships and have mentors. Definitely find a mentor – some days you just need someone to talk to.



How have you found adapting to the online ordering system?

We use Munch Monitor. At the start of COVID-19, the school board decided that there would be no more coin or money handling in the canteen, so money and over-the-counter coins disappeared. Everyone had to get on Munch Monitor. All of the hot food from that point on needed to be ordered online and we wouldn't be putting any food in the warmer if it wasn't ordered.

At first people found it a bit tough, but it's been great for the canteen. We have no wastage and it's a lot more hygienic when we don't have to deal with coins. It also probably saves me more than half an hour a day just with settling and counting cash. We find Munch Monitor a very affordable system to run. The only slight problem was that some people found it difficult to use the technology to order their food at first – but we encouraged them to come in and ask questions. I'm surrounded by people who can answer all their questions and help them get things up and running.



Have you found that online ordering has contributed to the sale of more healthy, Everyday options?

Definitely. I think it's been very positive because it has made people very intentional about what food they are ordering for their children. They've been making good choices, rather than giving their children money and telling them to buy what they want. It gives them a good idea of what their child is buying. With Munch Monitor – either the student or the parent can order and then there is a way where they can put 'snack money' on the account. This lets the kids make choices at the canteen as well as pre-ordering their lunch.