

TONBRIDGE SCHOOL



REVIEW OF CATERING OPERATIONS

Final Issue
16th MARCH 2006

The Loft, Post Office Cottage, Cholesbury Common, Buckinghamshire, HP23 6ND

Tel: 01494 758505

www.kendrickhobbs.co.uk

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kendrickhobbs

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1.0 INTRODUCTION & BRIEF

This document has been prepared for Ray Hart, The Bursar of Tonbridge School.

Following a meeting at the School on Friday 10th February, Kendrick Hobbs has been asked to support the School by providing an external review of catering operations. The objective of this is to independently review and comment on the overall quality and delivery of the catering services at the School.

The School itself is a long established boys boarding school providing education for boys from 13 – 18 years old. As is typical in such institutions, the School operates a house structure with boys allocated a house when they join the School. As the demand for the School's services has changed in recent years there are now dedicated day boy houses as well as the boarding houses. Traditionally, of course, all boys joined a house which provided all of their pastoral care including accommodation and food.

This report provides our review of the catering across all areas of the service. The focus of research has been the Schools' houses in which boarders are predominantly fed and the Orchard Centre in which day boys are mainly fed.

Our full brief is set out below for reference. This sets out what we have been asked to do and our methodology for this study.

Catering Operations Review

1. Visit Tonbridge School and meet with relevant representatives from the Schools' catering team to discuss catering operations. Discuss operational patterns, logistics, challenges and demand.
2. With support from the Catering Manager, to set up the meeting and with permission from the Bursar, meet in a 'focus group format' with a selection of users including: Housemasters and boys to discuss operations from their perspective, the quality, delivery and potential opportunities for products and services. This 'field based research' will aid our understanding of the feelings and views about the services.
3. Undertake visits to the Schools' houses and other catering areas to gain a detailed understanding of catering operations. We would suggest this be based upon a series of visits to meal periods at different Houses and the Orchard Centre and the Lowry Room on the following basis:
 - 2 x's House breakfasts
 - 2 x's House lunches

- 2 x's House suppers
 - 1 x's Lowry lunch
 - Sunday breakfast & lunch
4. Based upon the visits and the feedback received from the focus group, consider and review the following key operational areas:
- The catering management structure.
 - The levels of supervision across the houses and the levels of staff training.
 - The current menus in terms of choice, variety, component ingredients and healthy opportunities.
 - Review the overall quality of the delivery of catering operations.
5. Provide a brief review of trends and developments in the wider educational catering market in order to provide some perspective and highlight broad patterns.
6. Based upon information to be provided, briefly review the cost effectiveness of catering services. Review the catering budget, food costs, staff costs and other overhead costs and comment where appropriate.
7. Set out the research, analysis and recommendations in a report document covering all areas identified above. The report will be issued initially in draft in electronic format (PDF) and once finalised can be issued on paper in colour and bound.
8. Meet with the School to discuss the report's conclusions and implications.

2.0 THE CATERING SERVICE

This section summarises the research undertaken to underpin this study and our notes and comments relating to the service.

In order to set out the various areas of interest this section is structured as follows:

- Catering facilities
- Food ordering/ delivery/ storage
- Food production
- Menus
- Service
- Quality
- Customer feedback opportunities

Each is set out in turn:

2.1 CATERING FACILITIES

- There are nine separate catering facilities at Tonbridge School; one in each of the seven boarding houses (School House, Parkside, Park House, Hillside, Judde, Manor and Ferox Hall), the Lowry Room and the Orchard Centre.
- There are therefore nine separate fully functional kitchens. There is also a finishing kitchen in Smythe House.
- The Lowry Room facility services School staff for lunch but does not normally provide a breakfast or supper service, although this kitchen is additionally used for functions. The Lowry Room kitchen facilities are similar to those in the boarding houses, although the space is larger and there are some other general stores in this location.
- The Orchard Centre is the largest of the catering facilities housing the kitchen for this Centre which serves four of the five day boy house lunches and the School's butchery and bakery areas. These are dedicated areas located adjacent to the Orchard Centre kitchen but used exclusively for either butchery or bakery as the case may be. The Orchard Centre is a large professional set-up with an excellent range of good quality equipment.
- The only slight problem for the staff at the Orchard Centre is that three of the four dining room areas are located on the 1st floor level which necessitates the need to use a lift for transporting food. This is undertaken using hot trolleys where appropriate.

- The facility in each of the boarding houses is practically the same; there are minor differences of kitchen and dining room layout dictated by the size and shape of the areas of the houses in which these areas are located, but the capacity and capability of each boarding house kitchen is the same.
- Over the last few years most house kitchens have been completely refurbished and all provide modern, up to date equipment, fixtures and finishes. All kitchens include a very good range of good quality equipment, made by reputable manufacturers like Falcon and Rationale, including combination ovens, range ovens with gas hobs, grills and brat pans together with full mechanical extraction systems, canopies and filters.
- Floors, walls and ceilings are, without exception, well fitted in suitable finishes, in a good state of repair and clean. Kitchens are deep cleaned by a 3rd party contract cleaner annually.
- Inevitably some house kitchens are slightly more 'modern', having been refurbished most recently as a result of the 'rolling' pattern of refurbishment and investment. Nevertheless, all facilities are considered to be of a good to very good standard.
- In our experience, which includes designing and visiting all sorts of kitchen facilities on a continual basis, Tonbridge School can be satisfied that facilities are of good standard by any comparison and very good by school standards.
- Dining room areas vary dependant upon the space available in each house but provide adequate space for approximately 60 boys and the House Master to eat.
- Our only note of caution relating to facilities is the long term implication of the continual necessity to repair, maintain, upgrade and refurbish kitchens and ancillary areas. Inevitably this has, and will continue to place a burden upon financial resources. As the requirements imposed by UK and now EU legislation (as of January 1st 2006) continue to become more prescriptive, the requirements and the costs of meeting these requirements are likely to rise. Statutory food safety bodies including the FSA (Food Standards Agency), the newly created School's Food Trust and local council environment health departments are under increasing pressure to make public food premises safe and accountable and in order to do so standards become more detailed and prescriptive.
- At any school the need to deliver the very highest standards is obvious but achieving these standards requires continual investment in facilities. At Tonbridge, given its policy of house feeding, these implications relate to every one of the kitchen facilities.

2.2 FOOD ORDERING/ DELIVERY/ STORAGE

- Food ordering is undertaken by Head Cooks in individual houses or by the Executive Chef in the Orchard Centre in this location.
- Ordering is managed between the Head Cooks of each house and the Food Production Manager.
- The responsibility of Head Cooks is to assess how much of individual products are required and to place orders for these items within the parameters set out by the management team. Currently some deliveries come into the Orchard Centre and others go direct to houses:
 - Frozen, fish, dairy, fruit & vegetables direct to each house.
 - Meat to Orchard Centre & delivered to houses by butcher.
- Head Cooks' responsibilities however are limited and controlled by the Food Production Manager who is responsible for the specification of suppliers and for agreeing prices for all items. Therefore the ordering that the Head Cooks are doing is within controlled parameters.
- The School has a significant food budget and one of the important roles is to manage raw ingredients both in terms of quantity and quality but also in terms of cost.
- In order to maximise economies of scale and lever maximum purchasing power all ordering goes through the School central account. Supplier costs are therefore managed centrally and not by individual Head Cooks. This is important for control.
- Salad products for salad bars are delivered to the Orchard Centre, prepared in the Orchard Centre kitchen and delivered around the boarding houses each day. This is due to the relatively small quantities required and an ability to be able to increase the salad bar item choices if they are prepared centrally.
- Support is also provided by the Food Production Manager to define the product required for the menus especially if a new menu item has been selected. Again Head Cooks are assisted in the process of what and how much to order.
- Some items including fresh vegetables, dairy products, frozen goods and fresh fish items are delivered to individual house kitchens on a daily, weekly or as required basis. A system is in place and documented for checking the quality and temperature of incoming items as is recommended and good practice.

- Fresh meat and salad products (for salad bars) are delivered to the Orchard Centre. Meats are managed by the School's butcher. This enables some products to be prepared on site thereby reducing cost. Other meat items are purchased ready to cook. Fresh meat is then delivered around houses by the team in a small van. This is not refrigerated but ideally should be. Given the time periods involved this is not believed to be a legislative requirement would help to further minimise risk.
- Food storage occurs within individual kitchens in preparation for each day's menu. Fresh food is delivered to houses each day for consumption that day. This is good practice. Fridge and freezer temperatures are recorded as is required by law and temperature ranges observed in all kitchens fell within guidelines levels.
- There have been no occurrences of food poisoning that we are aware of, although there is always a risk that such an event may occur. It would be useful for samples of each meal especially assembled items like curry, meat based pastas, stews etc. to be kept for a short period after service so as to enable testing in the event of a food poisoning incident. This may in fact prove that the School was not the source of the problem.
- In most cases at least two suppliers are used at any one time i.e. two vegetable and fruit supplies, two meat supplies etc. This enables costs to be continually monitored and suppliers kept 'on their toes'. Furthermore, this enables a level of cover to be provided in case the School is let down by any supplier. In our opinion, this is good practice and works well.
- We also noted suitable systems for food storage in fridges and dry goods stores with fresh food wrapped, fresh products kept on appropriate levels in fridges (i.e. raw items on lower shelves and below cooked) and all foods kept off the floor. Standards of operation were good with no areas of concern noted.
- The only area where the catering management do not have responsibility for food is within the house 'brew rooms'. In these locations milk, bread and spreads are provided for consumption by boys at any time of the day, toasters and a fridge are also provided. As these are self-preparation areas catering management do not manage these spaces; they are in effect managed by the House Masters. With bread and spreads there is minimal risk but if boys were to bring in and use other fresh food items then they may put themselves at some risk, especially if they try and 'cook' basic items within these spaces. House Masters should retain a close eye on brew room practices and levels of cleanliness of course, are important in any food area.

- There are various purchasing consortia that operate and provide a central purchasing service for all sorts of catering establishments. The School has tested such companies recently and found them to be less competitive on price than they are able to achieve themselves. In our experience, views on the effectiveness of these consortia are mixed and we would not necessarily recommend they be the best approach in any case. However, it is certainly a useful exercise to 'test the market' and we would recommend this be done annually.

- One point of note relating to the Orchard Centre is the frequency of waste collection. Bins were observed as full to overflowing on at least one occasion and if more regular collections cannot be organised then more bins should be purchased to ensure bags are retained within sealed bin units.

2.3 FOOD PRODUCTION

- Food is produced in each kitchen for consumption in that house or in the Orchard Centre for the day houses that eat there.

- There is no use of central production, 'batch-cooking' or similar processes in any of the boarding houses.

- As has been set out each of the boarding houses has a fully functioning and self-contained kitchen. Food is delivered into individual houses and managed from that point as would be the case in any independent restaurant or kitchen facility.

- Staff in each house, under the supervision of the Head cook (see 3.1), prepare food for their house. Typically, the Head Cook will work in the morning and a couple of evenings per week. When the Head Cook is not at work an assistant cook will be in their place. Typically, the Head Cook will prepare lunch and often supper too from the fresh ingredients delivered daily to each house. There is very little fresh food that is held overnight in houses, the system operates on the principle of bringing in fresh food daily and consuming it that day.

- Production process observed typically include the preparation of the main lunch or supper item using either the brat pan (large open solid cooking unit – like a huge saucepan), combination oven (convection and steamer oven in one unit) or traditional oven range. Fryers are provided and used as required but there was no evidence of frying during research and we understand from discussion with Head Cooks that very little frying occurs these days. This is good practice as fried items are often high in saturated fats.

- Dry and frozen goods are held in each house and used as required. Typically products used are mainstream branded lines like: Kelloggs Cereals, Marmite, Flora etc. Bulk dry goods supplies are purchased through Brake Bros and 3663, both of whom are large reputable catering suppliers.

- The kitchen in the Orchard Centre produces food for all five of the day houses. Four of these houses then eat in the Orchard Centre, three of these using rooms on the 1st floor level and the 4th eating in the café area on the ground floor.

- The exception is Smythe House which has its food delivered the short distance to its 'holding kitchen' for service in the house dining room. At Smythe House there are only five meal services per week, one each lunchtime, whereas in the boarding Houses there are twenty one. The system for Smythe works well enough, although we would not recommend this type of service be replicated across the day houses. We understand recent demand from parents has resulted in more day boys than have historically been accommodated and the current numbers of day boys reflects this demand.

- There is no spare capacity in the Orchard Centre as a result of its size and the number of available seats for lunch. If greater capacity were required however, it might be possible to operate a staggered service which is widely used in many schools, although this depends upon the timetable. Staggered service can be introduced quite simply as meal periods are typically short. A first sitting could occur immediately after last morning period with boys then having a rest break after lunch. The houses in the second sitting would have a short reset break after the last morning period, and then have lunch. We are currently working with a School that operates three lunch sittings in a single dining room.

- The Orchard Centre caterers for approximately 330 lunches per day (including Smythe and 30 staff). The internal capacity is 225 at any one time. A double sitting could therefore cater for circa 450 plus a separate small staff sitting.

2.4 MENUS

As part of our research we visited all boarding houses and the Orchard Centre as well as studying menus and meeting with Masters, boys and Catering Management. One of the most important issues for this study is to consider the menus provided.

- In the boarding houses, breakfast, lunch and supper menus are provided based upon a four week cycle. This means menus are repeated every four weeks or approximately three times each term. In practice menus are varied slightly and developed each cycle and so menus are not simply rolled on and on and there is therefore less risk of menu fatigue.

- Within the cycle there is some pattern of menu items across the week with a roast lunch typically provided on a Wednesday, for example.
- On the basis of a four week cycle and seven days per week, there is a requirement to have twenty eight lunches, twenty eight supper dishes etc.
- The system used to operate on a six week cycle, although this has now been reduced to four weeks. In our opinion, four weeks offers ample choice. In fact, opinion at the focus group held to gather opinion on services, seemed to indicate that boys would prefer a shorter cycle with their favourite items occurring more frequently. This was especially felt to be the case for suppers.
- Whilst full meals are provided three times per day the main meal is provided at lunchtime. Meals include a range of fairly traditional items including roasts, stews, pastas and fish items.
- In order to stimulate choice and provide something special, theme days are also provided on an occasional basis and normally at a rate of one or two per term.
- Menus are posted in each house so boys are able to see what they have that day and in the days ahead and for the following week.
- Within the house feeding structure which operates Monday – Friday and for Saturday breakfast and lunch there is limited scope to offer much choice. The menus provided therefore offer only one main item on any day, be it a roast meat, fish etc. Boys do not have a choice of say a stew or a pasta dish for example. There are a number of reasons for this:
 - Cost – in order to offer a choice of main dishes a greater number of portions would be required in order to ensure everybody has that choice. Staff would have to over provide portions of each choice to ensure sufficient quantities for all. This would increase wastage and therefore increase food costs.
 - Space – some houses have very limited service spaces with food having to be served from counters which are only large enough for one choice.
 - Staff skills – the requirement to operate nine separate kitchen units increases the notoriously difficult role of finding suitable catering staff. This role is further complicated by the need to achieve three meal period services across up to seven days per week. The skills required to prepare and serve meals in houses are relatively modest below Head Cook level. Any permanent increase in choice would necessitate a requirement to improve skill levels. This is achievable but may require additional support in terms of training. Some increase in staff cost may be incurred as a result.

- In order to counter these concerns some possible solutions are set out below.
 - Cost concerns – in order to provide more choice but minimise effect on cost 60 meal portions could still be provided with say, a choice of a piece of meat or fish and this served on a first come first served basis. Of course, some boys towards the end of the queue may not then receive their favoured choice, although this would be no worse than the current situation.
 - Space concerns - Smaller serving dishes could in principle be used enabling a choice to be offered, even if the choice was just of the main protein item with the same accompaniment. A choice of a piece of meat or fish could be offered without a choice of accompaniments; rice and vegetables for example could suit both.
 - Skills concerns – choice would not necessarily have to be provided at every sitting and could be offered just at lunchtime or just for supper. This way Head Cooks could manage the additional production of two choices.

- The choice and variety available in houses during the week is currently restricted but in addition to the main meal there is now also always a salad bar at lunchtime and often in the evening as well. This has been added to reflect increasing demand for salad items and to extend choice. Boys can always order a salad meal alternative in advance for any evening.

- There is always a vegetarian option, although choice is inevitably somewhat restricted in individual houses during the week.

- We also noted the School caters very well for various food allergies in several houses.

- At weekends (Saturday supper and all day Sunday) the system changes completely and all boys and many Masters too, eat in the Orchard Centre. The three 1st floor dining rooms are opened up into a single large space and a temporary servery area constructed at one side. This service provides a very different solution to the boarding houses in the following ways:
 - Choice – as many more pupils and some staff are using the single facility and all staff resources are consolidated into this single location, the choice is much wider. For example, the Sunday lunch choice includes: two roast meats, a fish choice, an extensive self-service salad bar and an assisted service salad option plus soup, puddings and cheeses.
 - Flexibility – meal periods are longer and boys have some degree of flexibility as to when to come for their meal. Sunday lunch for example is 12.45 – 1.45.
 - Environment – the feel of the service is completely different with boys able to choose where to sit and who to sit with; there is no house structure.

- Views expressed during the focus group as to weekend services was very positive. We suspect there a number of reasons for this including the wide choice, wider flexibility and environment. Because there is more choice the service also looks more impressive and because the most experience staff operate in this facility it is delivered in a more professional manner; the perception therefore is improved. One of the main differences between the boys today and their parents' generation is their experience of different catering environments (see section 4.0). As a group the boys are a relatively sophisticated customer base and their perceptions of good service and quality is correspondingly high.

- Menus are on the School's web site accessible via www.tonbridge-school.co.uk/pastoralcare/meals.usml, although they are not especially easy to find. This is a useful and important inclusion on the site, allowing parents the opportunity to see what their boys are having as well as boys the opportunity to check forthcoming menus themselves. Greater use of electronic/ web media could be made via an e-mail based comment or request system.

- From a technical perspective menus are planned to meet guidelines (Food Standards Agency – Balance of Good Health) and healthy eating criteria. Menus therefore include specific amounts of a main protein item, carbohydrates and vegetables (see below).

- The School has been awarded the Council's 'Heartbeat Award' for healthy eating and in addition to normal meal times fruit is available in all Houses on an unlimited basis. Circa 90 pieces of fruit are consumed by each House per day indicating an average consumption of 1.5 pieces per day per boy. This excludes vegetables and any fruit boys may buy themselves.

- Food quantities are based upon Food Standards Agency and government guidelines at 110 grams of meat/ fish for the main meal, 110 grams of potatoes and 75 grams of vegetables.

2.5 SERVICE

- The service experience is provided within houses or in the Orchard Centre for day houses or boarders at weekends.

- In most cases boys are served main meal and accompaniments by catering staff, although there are minor differences between houses and sometimes vegetables are offered on tables for self-service.

- The main reasons for serving, as opposed to allowing boys to serve themselves is portion control and ensuring a orderly queue for food. This also allows some interaction between boys and catering staff.

- At breakfast cereals and toast are self served as are lunchtime salad bars.
- Boys are allowed to queue for seconds when staff or the House Master are satisfied that all boys have had a meal.
- Our perception of service during the week was fairly institutional. Main meal items or wet dishes are normally presented in large stainless steel containers are served directly onto plates from these. The portioning of items therefore typically occurs at the point of service. This 'canteen' style of service can sometimes feel rather basic. In some cases and for some meals it may be possible to serve food in a plated format i.e. with items already arranged on the plate. This technique is widely used in staff catering environments and can dramatically improve the perception of a dish.

2.6 QUALITY

- Quality is always a relative, personal and subjective judgement especially when associated with food.
- The feedback received at the focus group was generally positive, although inevitably some comments were made. Concerns were focused mainly upon supper with some comments made as to the quality of some of the more snack/ fast food items which are occasionally provided, sausage rolls with fried potatoes for example. The regularity of such items has recently been reduced but within the context of the whole week, we suspect most boys would still like to see such items included.
- Some comments were made relating to the quality of meat, although these were isolated to one individual. We suspect it is the cooking processes and not the quality of the meat that may have been at fault on occasion. Roast meats for example are pre cooked and carved to ensure consistency in the houses. Carving by the small teams in houses for 60 boys is not practical.
- Based upon the research undertaken for this study, which included visiting all houses, having meals and tasting other meals, we felt quality was good especially considering the number of meals provided and the operational complexities of the site from a foodservice perspective.

2.7 CUSTOMER FEEDBACK OPPORTUNITIES

- There are a variety of ways boys, Masters and parents, where appropriate can give feedback. These are as follows:
 - Food committees – these are operated on a house basis with meetings occurring as often as is required but typically termly.
 - House Masters' Meetings - food is always on the agenda for these twice a term.

- Upper and Lower School Councils.
 - On a day to day basis with catering staff.
 - On an as required basis with the Food Production Manager or catering manager.
-
- Across these various methodologies there are suitable feedback mechanisms and it seems that the catering management are quite prepared to consider any requests and make changes where appropriate.

 - As mentioned under 2.4 greater use of electronic/ web media could also be made via an e-mail based comments or request system. Such a system would allow instant and personal feedback without boys having to wait for a meeting format, although they can talk to Head Cooks or other catering managers anyway.

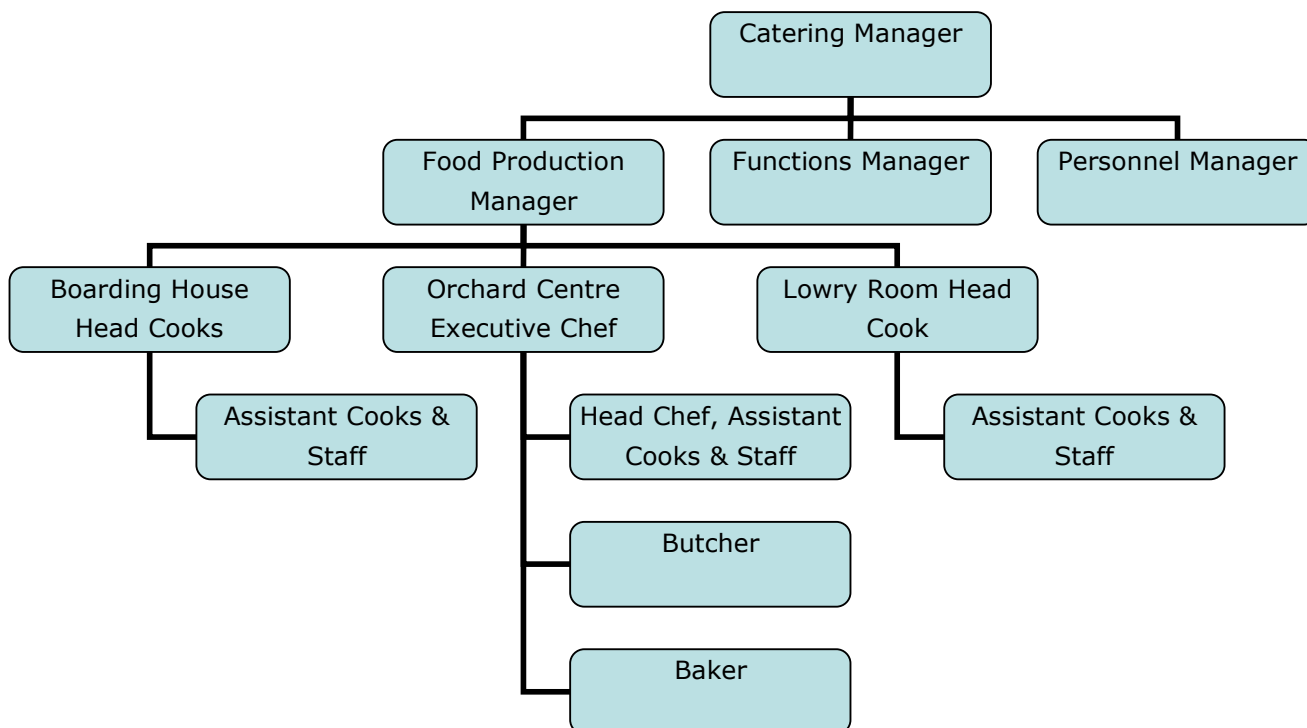
3.0 CATERING MANAGEMENT, STAFF STRUCTURE, BUDGETS & STANDARDS MONITORING

This section summarises the notes and observations pertaining to the staff and management structures, the catering budget and monitoring systems.

3.1 CATERING MANAGEMENT & STAFF STRUCTURE

- The team is managed by the Catering Manager, supported by a team of up to 150 staff (full & part time) across all areas and across the full week.

- The structure is as follows:



We have shown the house, Orchard and Lowry teams as reporting into the Food Production Manager/ Catering Manager which they do on a day to day basis, although they do also liaise with the Functions Manager as required.

- The structure is large and fairly complex. This is created by the necessity to service nine separate kitchens as has been explained.
- The Catering Manager is responsible to the Assistant Bursar on a day to day basis and ultimately to the Bursar. His role is to ensure operations are provided to an appropriate standard to achieve School policies, within budget, and to manage the team. The Catering Manager is 'hands-on' and visits all houses on a regular basis. This input is useful and appreciated by Head Cooks and other staff.

- The Catering Manager and Food Production Manger both hold a variety of relevant qualifications including Advanced Food Hygiene certification. Both also have extensive operational experience and have also both worked their ways up through the team at Tonbridge. They are known and seemingly popular members of staff and appear to have good relationships with Masters, boys and their staff.
- One of the managers is always available on the telephone and one is always on site during meal periods, seven days a week.
- Based upon our research, the management team provide a strong level of support, have a suitable knowledge base and take an active, positive and enthusiastic approach.
- In order to achieve relevant standards and consistency a standard menu is in operation across all houses including those using the Orchard Centre during the week. This element of the operation is managed by the Food Production Manger.
- All Head Cooks hold Basic Food Hygiene qualifications and four now have Intermediate Food Hygiene Certificates. All the Head Cooks have also passed their NVQ Level 2.
- From our research we feel Head Cooks, who are perhaps the most critical members of the team as far as the day to day delivery of the boy's food is concerned, are well supported and adequately supervised. The Head Cooks are in many cases mature females who live locally and fit work in around their family lives. Their role requires skill and some man management skills but they do not need to be professional chefs nor would it be practical or cost effective to employ professional chefs in their role.
- However, as the School operate with an in-house management team and they do not contract their catering service out to a 3rd party caterer, the team is isolated in that they do not have access to a central management or head office resource or regular contact with other sister sites from which to draw experience. This does not seem to cause the team any concerns and we would not recommend contracting out, although it is useful to bring in a *fresh pair of eyes* from time to time to review operations.
- It is also very useful and the management team should make a positive effort to visit other comparable locations as often as possible, industry shows and read industry journals to keep up to date with developments. They do some of this already.

3.2 CATERING BUDGET

- The School operates with a significant catering budget. This account represents the costs associated with providing catering services as described. It is not the purpose of this study to provide a detailed financial review however, briefly it is useful to understand the context.
- Essentially there are two main areas of costs: management & staff costs and food costs. These two areas always account for the large majority of the costs on any catering account. Of these, staff costs in this case represent the largest sum at circa £870,000 (2005/06 budget).
- The staff and management costs are segmented across houses based on the numbers of staff required in the various areas. Given the arrangement of facilities, staff numbers observed during research seemed reasonable and without changes to feeding patterns we cannot see any scope for major savings.
- It is increasingly difficult to attract staff in catering, especially in the South East and the School has a challenge to retain, wherever possible, and attract appropriate staff. In some cases generous hourly rates have to be paid in order to secure staff for short evening shifts.
- The School's budgeted food cost for this year (2005/06 budget) is just over £510,000. This is broken down on a daily basis per boy as:
 - Breakfast £0.78
 - Lunch £1.28
 - Supper £1.08
 - Sub total £3.14
- There are minor differences in cost allocations at weekends and for dayboy lunches. By wider comparison, this is a reasonably generous food cost budget allowing the School to provide the quality and range that it does. With a larger sum available higher quality and a greater choice of food could be provided, although the School has a responsibility to parents to deliver a sensible approach and value for money and in this they achieve a good balance.
- We have not reviewed or factored in any facility costs, maintenance or refurbishment in this analysis, although we have stated elsewhere that the School has in recent years allocated over £1m on refurbishing kitchen facilities.

- As is the case in many catering operations the main on-going challenge is to keep control of staff costs. This challenge is equally relevant at Tonbridge. Moving forward the management team must continually keep check of staff related costs, look to minimise staff hours wherever practical and appraise roles and responsibilities. All senior management as well as craft roles like the butcher, baker and Orchard Centre executive chef should be monitored to ensure these are both cost effective and deliver value for money. There was no evidence of complacency at Tonbridge but in similar environments we have come across before, complacency can sometimes creep in.

3.3 STANDARDS MONITORING

- Standards are continually monitored internally by the management team as has been described. There is also a dedicated file for each house which details any specific issues associated with service in that location.
- External monitoring is carried out by the statutory body, the local Environmental Health Department's officers. Their checks are carried out as they are across food production premises in the UK on a regular basis. We understand checks are normally undertaken about every 18 months. This is quite extended and normally the Environmental Health Department will inspect food premises annually, although this depends on local policy and they clearly feel every 18 months is sufficient in this case. Given the excellent state of facilities there is clearly little to concern the Environmental Health Department in any case. This body is available for consultation on an as required basis and therefore management can call on the Environmental Health Department if they need to for specific advice.
- Apart from the Environmental Health Department there is no other external monitoring and there may be a case for the creation of a qualitative standards system monitored by a 3rd party. We carry out quarterly audits for example at various establishments including part of Oxford University and a similar type of approach could be adopted if this was felt to be relevant. The sorts of areas that can be reviewed include:
 - Catering policies & objectives
 - Uniforms standards
 - Menus: the basic range, content, choice, balance etc.
 - Service styles & speeds & staff establishment levels
 - Training levels
 - State of equipment
 - Hygiene & cleaning standards
 - Purchasing procedures & supplier standards
 - Financial performance

4.0 TRENDS IN THE WIDER MARKETPLACE

We have summarised below some of the current issues, recent developments and market trends in the wider catering market and the school market:

- Many people in Britain through increased domestic and international travel have developed a growing interest in different styles of food and service. This is not restricted to adults and many teenagers and indeed younger children are much more food aware and astute than their parents would have been at a similar age.
- As a nation we are placing greater emphasis on 'eating in' and 'eating out'. Broadly speaking, the UK catering consumer at home, at work, school or as part of any sort of entertainment is much less prepared to accept poor standards, is more discerning in his/her choice and seeks greater value for money.
- There has been a move towards lighter and healthier foods and consumers demanding to know the origin and 'route to plate' of their meal ingredients.
- Following a number of food scares in recent years, as well as increasing suspicion of mass farming production techniques, consumers are now demanding more information on the integrity, traceability and handling of food. This true in all areas of food consumption.
- Increasing numbers of people are seemingly concerned over health and diet related issues associated with too much fast food and poor quality and inappropriate food. There has been much coverage in the media about various high profile issues including fast food quality, obesity and especially school meals.
- The Jamie Oliver effect has had wide publicity and drawn the attention of all parents to school catering issues. Whilst some quarters have criticised his efforts for oversimplifying issues, most commentators would agree that the publicity has been welcome.
- Overall Jamie Oliver's main points have been that the quality of food in schools has been poor, the budgets insufficient to enable schools to purchase decent quality products and therefore the menu lack in any taste or nutritional merit. For most school children the maximum number of meals they would have at school during the week would be five. At Tonbridge this number could be twenty one.
- It is important to note strongly that there are no real comparisons between the 'Jamie Oliver campaign' and the catering provision at Tonbridge where budgets (food cost) are at least double that often available for lunches at many schools and menus are balanced with fruit and vegetables always in evidence.

- All schools that provide catering are under increased pressure to deliver better quality and to be more accountable. Schools have unique pressures and typically suffer from low budgets, poor facilities and high expectations.
- Recently a new government body the Schools Food Trust has launched a consultation with all relevant stakeholders to assess whether to ban sweets and confectionery from schools.
- There is no doubt however that the effect of the whole healthy eating movement has had an effect on boys. We were asked in the focus group for more choice of vegetables and less 'fast food'; ten years ago this surely would never have happened.
- In many sectors the trend is away from the traditional meal period, with 'all day grazing' increasingly adopted, as opposed to more formal breakfast, lunch and evening meal time periods. Lunchtime in particular, has become a much more flexible and a less fixed or formal period. The trend is away from formal dining, increasingly disposables are being introduced and more products are being made available as finger food to eat on the move or at the consumer's desks or workstations. Whilst this is true it is a difficult trend for a school to both manage and cater to when they are bound to a timetable and do not have the flexibility that people in the adult workplace may adopt.
- Sandwiches, salads and hot snacks like jacket potatoes and panini's are consistently the most popular items in lunchtime surveys. Every other year Eures, part of the Compass Group, undertake a survey of the UK's lunchtime eating habits. A summary of some of the key conclusions from the 2004 study are highlighted below:
 - Many people in Britain's spend more money each day on snacks than they do on their midday meal.
 - One in three people are concerned about fat and calorie intake, while the most important factors in choosing lunch are taste, health, price and quality.
 - Sandwiches are the preferred lunchtime food, followed by fruit and salad.
- A survey of 8,000 consumers by Harris International Marketing in October 04 found that 62% were eating or grazing throughout the day rather than just at traditional meal times.
- In some sectors there is also demand for organic and FairTrade accountability. FairTrade offers reasonable prices and treatment afforded all the way through the supply chain. It is now definitely fashionable to offer locally sourced, organic and FairTrade products and many branded operators like Starbucks offer some FairTrade choices. This trend is likely to expand into more and more products.

- Operators are designing production systems and menus with a greater emphasis on freshly prepared items. This can be seen through deli bars and visible 'theatre' cooking production in front of the customer at noodle bars like Wagamama and other themed restaurants. There is a perception in such environments of a fresher product and in turn an association of a higher quality product. Canteen and tray-run style service system are seen as old fashioned.
- Choice decisions are based not only on the merchandise, but also on the 'lifestyle' attributes of the product, brand or concept and the values and characteristics that differentiate one from another. There is a fashion lifecycle attached to concepts and products.
- A survey (June 2005) by retail insight consultancy Him! revealed that more than a quarter of those questioned said they were eating out more than they did a year ago. On average Brits eat lunch 'on the move' nine times a month and their evening meal away from home four times a month. High street retail concepts like Greggs, Subway, Café Nero and Pret à Manger attract the youngest audience with 30% of customers under 24 and 59% of these female.
- The frequency of eating out has increased and moved away from being limited to special occasions. The eating-out market has grown by 60% over the past 10 years but the pace of growth in 'fast food' has outstripped that in 'sit-down' restaurants. According to the British Lifestyles report from Mintel, published in March 2004, people in the UK spent more than £25b on eating out last year - 60% more than in 1993.
- This report identified that fast food remains the largest market sector, with £10b spent on hamburgers, fried chicken, chips and other fast food. However, the profile of the fast food market is changing dynamically however, with salads and chicken products now well represented at leading brands. McDonald's have also announced a successful trial of deli sandwiches in the North East and a 'roll out' of these new menu items nationwide. They have also changed the profile of children's Happy Meals which now contain fruit and vegetable options. KFC have recently announced they will no longer be adding salt to their fries.
- Perhaps more dramatically however, very recently McDonald's have announced the closure of some stores and the sale of some others to franchisees. Having developed the business consistency since the early 1980's this is an extraordinary turnaround.
- Celebrity chefs have also made food more interesting, more appealing and more accessible. In summary, expectations have risen and the consumer benefits from huge variety and choice of types of catering. These pressures and some high profile media intervention have *turned up the heat*.

5.0 SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides a summary of conclusions and recommendations.

- Overall, it is appropriate to summarise that the School is providing an excellent catering service with good quality products, well balanced nutritional menus and sufficient quantities of food provided and with relevant support and back-up systems in place to manage the service.
- Over the last few years most house kitchens have been completely refurbished and all provide modern, up to date equipment, fixtures and finishes. The School can be satisfied that facilities are of good standard by any comparison.
- Our only note of caution relating to facilities is the long term implication of the continual necessity to repair, maintain, upgrade and refurbish kitchens and ancillary areas. The requirements and the costs of meeting these requirements are likely to rise as legislation becomes more prescriptive in response to consumer demand for safer food premises.
- A refrigerated van would be useful and facilitate lower risk transportation of fresh meat and salad products (for salad bars) which are delivered into the Orchard Centre and then transported to individual houses.
- Despite the good practice that is in place, there is always a risk of food poisoning and it would be useful for samples of each meal to be kept for a short period after service so as to enable testing in the event of a food poisoning incident.
- House Masters should retain a close eye on brew room practices and levels of cleanliness in these areas.
- Catering management on behalf of the School should continue to 'test the market' with regard purchasing consortia and alternative suppliers to continually monitor quality and costs.
- The frequency of waste collection at the Orchard Centre should be increased or additional bins purchased.
- If greater capacity were required in the Orchard Centre on a permanent or temporary basis, it would be possible to operate a staggered meal service for some or all meals. The internal capacity is 225 at any one time. A double sitting could therefore cater for circa 450 which would be sufficient to cater for all boarders for supper.

- In the boarding houses, breakfast, lunch and supper menus are provided on a four week cycle, although menus are slightly varied each cycle. However, boys asked for and may prefer a shorter cycle with their favourite items occurring more frequently at supper. A 'favourites' two week cycle could be trialled to test popularity.
- Menus are posted in each house so boys are able to see what they have that day and in the days ahead and for the following week, although these menu posters don't look terribly exciting. A more contemporary format and font may increase the likelihood of boys studying these and indeed their perception of the whole service.
- Views expressed during the focus group as to weekend services was very positive due to the wider choice, flexibility and environment. The choice and variety available in houses during the week is currently restricted but in addition to the main meal there is a salad bar. To increase the choice and equally importantly the perception of choice some element of choice could be tested at some sittings to assess the effect on cost, space and staff resources. This could be restricted to choice of main protein item only.
- Our perception of service during the week was fairly institutional with all main meal items or wet dishes are presented in large stainless steel containers are served directly onto plates from these. For some meals it may be possible to serve food in a plated format i.e. with items already arranged on the plate which would improve the perception of the dish.
- Overall we feel quality is good, especially considering the number of meals provided and the operational complexities of the site from a foodservice perspective.
- One of the useful comments made at the catering focus group was related to the time of supper and boys being hungry later in the evening. Supper is at 6.10 – 6.15, which on balance, given other activities and timings does seem the best time. We were asked to consider if anything could be provided later in the evening. On reflection, we think it is important not to create another service as this would add to the complexity of operations and cost if any additional staff were required. However, an upgraded brew room box could be provided including bread, milk, cheese, fruit and occasional biscuits. This would provide the boys a snack opportunity later in the day, although it would need to be self policed.
- In our opinion, there is a place and an argument for selling quality confectionery at the tuck shop in the Orchard Centre. Banning the sale of all 'treats' in this location will simply push boys into the town where the choice of what they might buy will be greater. At least in the tuck shop good quality branded confectionery as well as more health conscious snacks can be provided and the choice sensibly controlled.

- Water should be provided rather than juice at all meal periods.
- There are a variety of ways boys, Masters and parents can give feedback. Catering management also seem quite prepared to consider any requests and make changes where appropriate. It might be possible and useful to set up an e-mail based comment or request system.
- The staff structure is large and fairly complex but well managed and supervised.
- The Head Cooks should continue to be encouraged to complete Intermediate Food Hygiene Certificates and Assistant Cooks NVQ Level 2 where appropriate.
- The management team should make a positive effort to visit other comparable locations, industry shows and to continue to read industry journals to keep up to date with developments.
- The management team must continually keep check of staff costs, look to minimise staff hours wherever practical and appraise roles and responsibilities. All senior management as well as craft roles like the butcher, baker and Orchard Centre executive chef should be monitored to ensure these are cost effective and deliver value for money.
- Furthermore to promote better perceptions parents should be encouraged to visit and eat with their boys and if interested tour house kitchens. Overall the facilities and services provided are impressive and this 'open door' policy, even if the uptake is modest, would improve the perception of the service. It is important that both boys and their parents feel catering is 'on their side' and that kitchens are not hidden away. The standards in any of the house kitchens are much better than the majority of facilities we come across.
- Apart from Environmental Health there is no external monitoring and there may be a case for the creation of a qualitative standards system monitored by a 3rd party focused on quality and ultimately value for money from the parents' perspective. This could be done once or twice each term for limited cost and would provide some comfort that standards are independently monitored.

Longer Term

- Longer term, or as part of future planning exercises, further consideration might need to be given to the concept of some form of central 'out of house' dining. We fully understand the School's policy and the pastoral issues associated with in-house dining. However, some form of central 'out of house' dining could deliver a number of advantages as follows:

- An ability to significantly extend choice. In practical terms this would mean being able to offer a choice of main meals, as opposed to just one main option. These choices could include more healthy, vegetarian and more innovative food items which prove difficult to provide across each house as it is only possible to provide one main meal choice. Salad options are provided at lunchtime but as the take-up is low the extent of choice is limited.
 - An ability to improve efficiency and maximise use of the best staff. Inevitably as a result of having multiple small production kitchens the skill levels of staff across breakfast, lunch and supper shifts varies. Head Cooks in each house cannot work all shifts and assistants have to cover. With a central facility fewer cooks would be required and therefore the best cooks could be deployed in this location for the benefit of all boys.
 - By focusing resources in a single central location the operational logistics are simplified enormously. This reduces risks.
 - An ability to improve quality, efficiency **and** reduce operational and capital cost.
 - A large majority of the operational costs of any catering service is that of staff costs. With a central facility staff costs could be reduced by up to 50%.
 - An ability to minimise on-going investment in facilities and plant. Recently a large investment has been made and most house kitchens refurbished to an excellent standard. In 7 – 10 years time when these need to be refurbished again, costs and the standards required of kitchens are likely to have risen further. With a central facility capital investment can be focused in a single area.
- Some schools like Harrow for example provide a central facility with dining areas segmented into house groups. This is one route, alternatives include segmentation by year group.
 - The scale of a central facility is obviously an issue both in terms of its possible location, size and cost. These are issues beyond the scope of this report. However, by operating a shift system for meals it is possible to reduce the size requirements that would otherwise be required.
 - The benefits of house based dining are favoured by the School and most parents, but this view may change as the benefits of a central solution become more pronounced as the complexities of the current arrangements grow in the future. We suspect pressure is likely to grow given increasing focus on food hygiene, health & safety and heightened demand for fresh foods and more innovative foods.

16th March 2006

 **kendrickhobbs**
www.kendrickhobbs.co.uk