

Independent School cost of catering benchmarking

There are a number of industry average benchmark costs or percentages that can be applied to a catering provision within an Independent School to ascertain whether the service is running efficiently.

Naturally no two schools have identical catering services. There are many variables that will positively or negatively influence the associated running costs; typically being:

- The range of the menu offer (i.e. Continental breakfast v. full English; 2, 3 or 4 main course choices at lunch)
- Differing styles of service (i.e. cafeteria or family style service; central dining or in houses)
- Portion size allowance (i.e. Industry average controlled/assisted service or entirely self-help)
- Onerous longstanding staff terms & conditions (i.e. generous sick pay allowances, enhanced overtime rates)
- The negotiated price of food and sundry goods (i.e. local suppliers v. national and volume purchase discounts)
- The skill set of the catering team (i.e. Commercial awareness of Manager and/or financial acumen of Chef)
- Physical layout of the service points (i.e. more than one dining room; food transported to Prep School etc.)
- Food inflation (was running at 10% - 14% last year but this year has levelled out to between 2% - 5%)
- School location (i.e. local labour rates or if remote location restricted food suppliers with premium prices)
- The roles of the catering team (i.e. do they do 'additional' duties such as dining room supervision or cleaning)
- The size of the school (i.e. normally the larger the school the lower the staffing ratio to food consumption)
- The size of the boarding contingency (Generally the staffing cost ratio reduces as boarding numbers increase)
- The cost of feeding girls and boys tends to be very similar as boys prefer plainer dishes but in bulk (i.e. Cottage Pie using minced beef) whilst girls prefer smaller more refined dishes (i.e. Char-grilled chicken Caesar salad using a chicken breast)

For this exercise the following criteria has been used: (Allow a 10% increase in pupil food costs for staff)

Breakfast

Cooked with 3 daily hot options plus cereals, juices, toast and preserves. Part assisted service for hot items.

Lunch - Main meal of the day

Two meat main courses and one vegetarian. Two vegetables and one potato dish. Sauces and condiments. One hot pudding and one cold sweet plus sauces. Self help salad bar with three protein items and four composite salads plus full range of salad items. Assisted service for main courses and hot pudding.

Supper - Secondary meal of the day.

Two meat main courses and one vegetarian. Two vegetables and one potato dish. Sauces and condiments. One sweet. Self help restricted salad bar with two protein items and three composite salads plus restricted range of salad items. Assisted service for main courses, puddings pre-portioned.

	Prep day	Prep boarding	Senior day	Senior boarding
Breakfast (pupils +/-10% for staff)	-	0.75	-	0.85
Morning or afternoon break (+10% for staff)	0.15	0.15	0.20	0.20
Lunch (pupils / +10% for staff)	0.85	0.85	£1.05	£1.05
Supper (pupils / +10% for staff)	-	0.80	-	£1.00
Staffing cost ratio to annual food consumption	125%	150%	115%	140%
Sundry cost ratio to annual food consumption	7%	6%	7%	6%