



Professional Development

Issue 7 - Spring 2014

School is Awarded CPD Mark

Ashby School has been awarded the coveted CPD Mark for its commitment to professional development across the school.

The school scored top marks – category A – in 95 per cent of the criteria.

An external assessor rated the school on its performance in Vision and Planning, Induction, Partnerships and Networks, Professional Standards, the Curriculum, and Performance Management and Appraisal.

Assessor Graham Rollinson praised 'the experience and determination of the senior leaders and Governors at the school in their quest to achieve excellence' and applauded the 'strategic leadership' of Head of CPD, Sheila Dennis.

He also commended 'the positive impact on standards across the school as a result of the CPD activities which have taken place'.

Alan Davies, the Governor with responsibility for CPD, said: "The assessor's extremely positive verdict gives confidence to everyone at the school that we are doing the right things."

The assessor also noted that "The CPD plan is well thought out and staff are fully aware of it. Governors recognise the importance of staff development in taking the school forward, and the importance of effective CPD in raising standards.

"Staff are highly valued, and that the school is committed to fostering a positive climate for the continuous learning and development to the benefit of all."



CPD practice at the school is outstanding because it is:

- strategic and in line with the school's vision and development priorities
- commensurate with all CPD Mark performance criteria
- exceptionally well led and strategically managed by the CPD Leader Sheila Dennis
- inclusive of all staff at the school
- bespoke to meet individual staff training requirements
- innovative
- well resourced
- evaluated for impact

The school achieved:

- 95% category A criteria
- 5% category B criteria
- 100% category A and B criteria

He also observed that, by using the expertise of its staff, many NQTS frequently progressed from 'satisfactory' teaching to 'good' and 'outstanding' during their time at the school.

Mr Rollinson concluded: "This is a school where feedback is actively sought and welcomed as part of the improvement and professional development processes."

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ACE Visitors in School



Leaders from five local secondary schools were at Ashby School to see its new hi-tech learning hub in action. Senior staff from King Edward VII, Newbridge and Castle Rock schools at Coalville sampled a lesson in the hub, along with staff from Ibstock and Ivanhoe high schools. They were also given a tour of the school, visiting classrooms and talking to students.

Pictured: Students Lily Walker and Ben Knight with senior leaders (left to right) Julia Patrick from Castle Rock, David King from Ibstock, Greg Bellmore from Ivanhoe and Jenny Byrne from King Edward VII.

Introduction from the Head of Professional Development

Being awarded the prestigious CPD Mark award for excellence in professional development practice across the school, was a fitting end to a busy 2012/13, 'jam-packed' with professional development opportunities for all.

Many staff have developed leadership skills by leading training sessions for colleagues on their areas of expertise, whilst the establishment of cross-curricular professional learning communities (PLC) has encouraged collective creativity and sharing of good practice. It is your participation and commitment to your own and your colleagues' professional development that was highly commended by the CPD Mark assessor and secured us the award.....thank you.

This year our model of CPD has evolved as we have responded to your evaluations and requests for more opportunities to work within cross-curricular, as well as faculty-based, PLCs. Lead teachers are enjoying their new role as facilitators and are very much looking forward to their PLC members taking the initiative to lead on teaching and learning developments that are of interest to their learning community.

Our new, hi-tech Learning Hub is proving very popular with staff, and students, across the curriculum. It offers a physical learning environment that is different to the spaces we usually use and, whether you use the 21st-century technology that is on offer or not, students seem to be enjoying this innovative, 'no-desks' learning experience.

Teachers Take the Lead

Teachers from Ashby School have been working alongside colleagues from their feeder high schools to fine tune their leadership skills.

Five teachers from each of the schools - Ashby School, Ivanhoe College and Ibstock Community College - completed the year-long Middle Leaders' Development Programme (MLDP).

During the course, they shared ideas, learned new leadership strategies and looked at ways of boosting student progress further.

If you haven't taken your class into the learning hub yet, I would highly recommend it; Ali and Kirt are always happy to discuss the lesson with you - in fact, Kirt and the digital leaders just love all the creative teaching ideas we come up with so, go on, challenge them! (Sorry Kirt!)

It is pleasing to see that some staff are also embracing school-based research to improve their practice and, thus, the progress of their students. Four international reviews of evaluations of CPD over a ten-year period have consistently shown that CPD that makes a difference is collaborative, sustained, draws on evidence from research and practice and involves participants in experimenting with new approaches and observing their effects⁽¹⁾. I am sure that we will all have lots to learn from the findings of our school-based research projects.

As the content of this newsletter shows, there have been many success stories this year. Congratulations go to Peter Jones, Lee Shepherd, Fiona McCafferty and Andrew Plaskett who have all successfully completed their Middle Leadership Development Programme training. Also, many congratulations to Hugh Birtwhistle who has recently achieved his BEd degree and Tom Ellicock and Rebecca Knight who have both been awarded their MSc.

We have another busy year ahead of us as we continue to develop the expertise and skills of our workforce in order to gain the most positive outcomes for



our young people. You will be guided in this endeavour by your performance management appraisal and the school's development needs. Our four priority areas for school improvement include:

- Pupil Premium
- Literacy Across the Curriculum
- Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural
- Marking and written assessment

Whatever your training need, we are here to support your personal development so that you progress in your career. Please feel free to drop me an email if you want to discuss your professional development and we will arrange to meet for a chat.

Sheila Dennis
Head of Professional Development

⁽¹⁾ http://www.curee.co.uk/files/publication/1313765928/Inside_Info_Issue_5.pdf



A presentation evening to mark the end of the course was held at Ivanhoe College.

Peter Jones, Head of Religious Studies at Ashby School, who completed the course, said: "I would highly recommend the course. It helps to develop your leadership skills, even though you may already think you have them. It has confirmed to me how much I love teaching and want to be in the classroom."

David King, Principal at Ibstock Community College, added: "It is superb to see the commitment that these teachers have shown to the course and to their schools."

Induction? Indeed.

New staff are already making an impact across the school.



Alex Weston



Judith Rowe



Naomi Parkinson



Thomas Rees



Jack Cuthbert



Esther Lockley



Christine Robinson



Chloe Reeves



Angie Borland



Jenny Hatcher



Natalie Watkins



Nicola Downing

Since the Summer, the school has appointed teachers Alex Weston (Head of Maths), Judith Rowe (Maths), Naomi Parkinson (Maths), Thomas Rees (Chemistry), Jack Cuthbert (History), Esther Lockley (Biology), Christine Robinson (Biology), Chloe Reeves (Humanities), Angie Borland (English), Jenny Hatcher (Geography), Natalie Watkins (Business) and Nicola Downing (Media and Film).

New support staff include Aidan Blythe (Design) and Sue Spencer (Arts and Design).

The school was praised by the CPD assessor for its comprehensive induction programme for new staff, NQTs and trainee teachers which covers aspects such as teaching and learning, health and safety, SEN, assessment for learning, behaviour management, 'Managing a Heavy Workload', data analysis and differentiation among others.



Aidan Blythe



Sue Spencer

There is a separate professional learning programme for new teaching staff, as well as the whole staff programme.

The induction programme – which runs over several sessions throughout the year – is led by key members of staff. Topics include the role of the Year team, safeguarding children, performance management, the role of the Governor, curriculum planning, exams procedure, an introduction to the library and a visit to School House.

School Direct is Coming!

The training of new teachers will be carried out in schools in future, as part of the Government's School Direct programme.

In 2014, Ashby School will have three ITT students on the School Direct programme as part of the Forest Way Teaching Alliance.

Sheila Dennis has been working closely with the Alliance to develop a course for trainee teachers at Ashby School.

A programme for primary school teachers is already underway.



According to the Department of Education, 'School Direct is a response to what schools have asked for: more influence and control over the way that teachers are trained. It is a way of ensuring that newly qualified teachers deliver great lessons in your school.

'Working with a teacher training provider of your choice, you get to select and recruit the trainees that your partnership of schools wants to employ as teachers once they qualify and shape their training to suit your school(s) and pupils.

'School Direct is a way of growing your own teachers and future leaders; it can make a key contribution to your school improvement strategy and help the continuing professional development of your staff.'

Leicester University is the accrediting body for teachers coming through the Forest Way Teaching Alliance.

CPD Governor Explains Why He's Happy to be a Mark-ed Man

As the Governor overseeing the school's CPD programme, Alan Davies was delighted when Ashby School was awarded the CPD Mark - and covered in praise along the way.

Alan Davies comes to Ashby School wearing many hats; he is a Governor, a parent, an accountant and a former senior manager, to name but a few.

Now active in the school's quest for CPD excellence, Alan is drawing on the experience he has gained in all of these roles to push effective personal development to the fore.

As a former Deputy Chief Executive of North West Leicestershire District Council, Alan was responsible for the morale and performance of a large workforce.

He said: "If you encourage people to have an interest in their development, you get a much better workforce and a better result which in our case is education. That is what is recognised by the CPD Mark. To get such a positive report is fantastic."

Alan's two years as a Governor have coincided with a period of huge change, including a boost to the profile of professional development.

'Support for staff development has a high profile with staff and Governors.'

- CPD report

Innovative ways of looking at learning and support mechanisms have led to the introduction of PLCs, learning walks, coaching and mentoring, and much more.

New but affordable approaches to CPD like these have also become necessary in light of reduced budgets for schools.

Alan said: "I get the impression that the school has always made good arrangements for developing its people. Now Eddie has made personal development a priority and Sheila Dennis does a great job of coordinating it.

"If you have got a motivated, well trained and well remunerated workforce, you tend to get good people and, from what I have seen, we have got good people.



That is based on my experience as a Governor and as a parent."

In the CPD report, Ashby School was applauded for its performance in all six categories: Vision and Planning, Induction, Partnerships and Networks, Professional Standards, the Curriculum, and Performance Management and Appraisals.

'The school makes good use of the mentoring and coaching skills offered by the more experienced and suitably experienced colleagues. In recognising and utilising the expertise of many of its staff NQTs are frequently seen to progress from 'satisfactory' teaching to 'good' and 'outstanding' teaching.'

This included praise for the culture of coaching and mentoring which has sprung up amongst staff. Along with the school's induction process, this was credited with helping new teachers to become 'good' and even 'outstanding' members of staff.

In the report, Ashby School was commended for its links with organisations such as the Teaching School Alliance, NCSL, local schools and other networks.

Alan, who worked as an accountant for 40 years, is an ardent advocate of sharing best practice for new and experienced staff, both inside and outside school.

He is also keen to ensure that development opportunities are available to all staff, not just teachers.

"We have got to look at the whole workforce. We have got to look at the support staff. Everyone has got

development needs even if they do not recognise it.

"We have to recognise that everyone is important. We want to make sure that everyone gets that development opportunity."

'..the school is very much a part of the community and has fully embraced its role in community engagement. The community and the school have both benefitted enormously from this reciprocal partnership.'

One of the recommendations of the CPD report was to raise the profile of the CPD Governor, encouraging him to work more closely with Sheila Dennis, the school's Head of Professional Development, to 'provide more support and challenge'.

This is a suggestion that Alan relishes. He said: "If I can play a part in the development of the staff and act as a bridge between the Governors and the school, that has got to be in everybody's interests. I have always been a fan of walking the walk. I went on the induction meal. I am going with Sheila Dennis to support her on her visits to teachers.

"As part of raising my profile, I want to make the Governors more aware of what the school is doing about CPD and what Governors can do about their own CPD requirements."

Governors have already signed up to 'G-set', a new online tool which looks at individual competencies and helps to identify areas for each Governor's personal development.

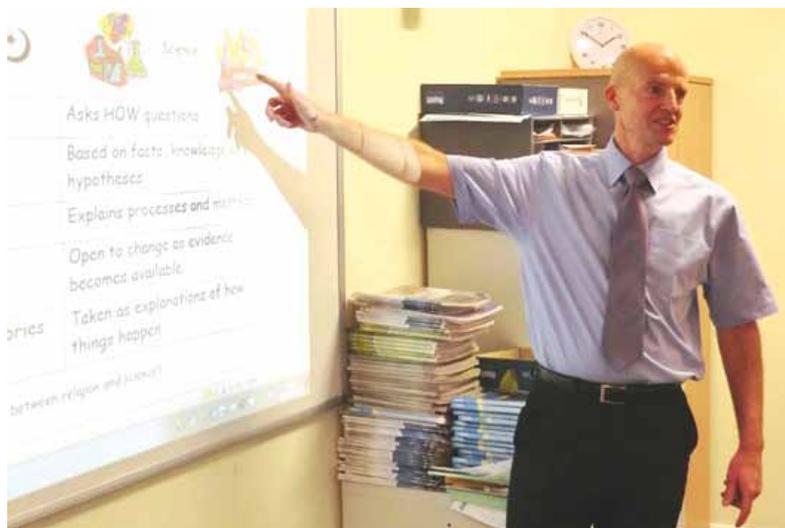
His enthusiasm for these new initiatives – and for the school, as a whole – shows no sign of waning.

Alan concluded: "With the CPD Mark, we met 95 per cent of the criteria. When you get somebody coming in from outside and looking at how things work, you can't really hide from that. This report gives us confidence that we are doing the right things.

"One of the things I like about Ashby is that I see lots of happy, smiling faces and that includes the staff."

How Leaders Are Learning to 'Do the Right Thing'

Learning never ends, even for experienced teachers like Peter Jones. As one of the latest cohort to complete the Middle Leaders Development Programme (MLDP), he came across some interesting – and reassuring – discoveries along the way.



“That is what learning is. You suddenly understand something you’ve understood all your life, but in a new way.” – Doris Lessing

Teaching is all about being open to new ideas. This was, and remains, Peter Jones’ firm belief.

In his 15 years at Ashby School, Peter had never undertaken anything like the MLDP. But, as Head of RS, he wanted to find out more about the latest strategies for, and attitudes to, leadership.

The course is based on the concept that leaders and managers perform different roles. Leaders are the path-makers who create a vision. They ‘do the right thing’ by providing the framework and the ideas for others to implement.

Managers, on the other hand, are defined as path-followers who ‘do things right’. Essentially, they do their best to keep to the message.

But Peter believes there is some overlap between the two.

He said: “Leadership is more visionary. In our case, it is about ‘moving to outstanding’. But I would argue that leaders are also managers. There is some crossover between the two.

“As a leader, I want to keep developing and to learn new things as they are introduced. My vision is to raise the profile of RS.”

When Peter arrived at the school, there was no RS course. In time, he introduced a GCSE short course, then an A level.

Now students do the full course, but in 50 per cent of the time allotted to other subjects.

This year, for the first time, there are two AS groups and two A2 groups, overseen by

two RS specialists – Peter and Aimee Littler.

Along with Chloe Reeves, the third full time RS teacher, they have three dedicated classrooms and – something that Peter sees as a particular triumph – their own corridor which gives the subject its own geographical identity.

Peter’s next aim is to push up GCSE results to achieve a pass rate of 70 per cent. A level results are already good.

How has MLDP helped?

Since completing the course, Peter has made more time to evaluate his teaching practice.

Reassuringly, he has discovered that much of what he has been doing for years is just as valid as it always was.

Peter said: “The course makes you stand back and look at what you are doing. When you are teaching, you are so busy, you don’t have chance to evaluate what you are doing.

“Because you are doing the course, it makes you create the time to stand back and think ‘what leadership competencies am I using?’

Leadership Competencies

Leading Strategically

Information seeking

Conceptual thinking

Leading People

Relating to others

Developing others

Holding others to account

Inspiring others

Self management

Self awareness

Resilience and emotional maturity

Integrity

Leading services

Future focus

Serving others

Personal drive

Analytical thinking

Leading in the Community

Partnership working

Organisational understanding

Impact and influence

“It makes you realise that there are lots of different competencies and different strategies and you can use them all. In fact, you are probably using a lot of them already.”

Others who are considering enrolling on the course next year may benefit from Peter’s advice.

He said: “I would highly recommend the course. It helps you to develop your leadership skills, even though you may already think you have them. It helps you realise the variety of strategies that are out there.

“I love teaching. I would not want to go out of the classroom. I want to be here inside the classroom.”

Jill Moves to Maths – Why it all Adds Up

Jill King is one of two teaching assistants working towards an NVQ level 3 Diploma in Specialist Support for Teaching and Learning in Schools. Here she explains why she left a high-pressured career in industry for the classroom.

Before coming to Ashby School, Jill King worked long hours as a payroll supervisor for a large company. It was hard work but paid well.

Jill never questioned her commitment to her career until the loss of a loved one prompted her to review her lifestyle. She gave up her job and vowed to redress her work/ life balance.

The vacancy at Ashby School was an opportunity to use her fluency with numbers to help young people.

She has now been at Ashby School for five years, working exclusively in Maths with under-achieving students.

Jill said: “The most satisfying thing is helping the students to get through their exams. It is a great feeling to see

a child make a breakthrough in their understanding.”

In 2010, she and fellow teaching assistant Julie Holmes completed their Level 2 Diploma. They have now embarked on the Level 3 qualification through South Leicestershire College. Over the 18 month course, she and Julie will cover 12 units.

Jill has just completed her first unit, ‘Communication and Professional Relationships with Children, Young People and Adults’.

Other units include team working, understanding children and young people’s development, leading an extra curricular activity and support in a curriculum area.

Jill said: “I have been helping to run the after school Maths class for underachieving students which supports what I am doing on the course.

“It helps you to think about behaviour in the classroom, understanding students, what problems they may have or be



bringing into school that we may not be aware of. It is a much more rewarding job.”

Last year, Jill sat the same exam as her students – a foundation GCSE in Applications of Mathematics and came out with the highest possible mark, a C.

She said: “When I took this job, I wanted to do something that was more meaningful. Sometimes you realise that there is more to life than just working and money.”

A Big Year for...Michael White

Lead teacher Michael White is one of nine members of staff heading up this year’s Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Here he talks about the challenges of the role.

Cross-curricular PLC communities have begun thrashing out issues that are close to the hearts of all teaching staff, including ‘What is a good lesson?’.

For Michael White, this is an opportunity to be at the centre of the school’s drive for improvement.

The role of lead teacher was a logical step for Michael, who last year was part of the school’s ‘good to outstanding’ programme. This year, he sees himself as a facilitator for his cross-faculty PLC group of 12 staff, which includes two Heads of Faculty.

Surely it must be a little daunting to lead a group that includes older, more senior and more experienced members of staff?



Michael confesses to early day nerves but says these were quickly overridden by the energy of the discussions.

Michael said: “Already, the PLCs have been really useful in terms of working across departments and getting a whole school opinion on general teaching issues. We are looking at sharing ideas on progression and how we can implement them in each subject.”

Action Research

Each lead teacher must produce an action research project.

Inspired by the massive technological changes at Ashby School, Michael is focusing on RealSmart’s cloud-based

technology and its possibilities for teaching and learning.

Michael, who is also Ashe House Manager, said: “The possibilities are huge. For instance, teachers can post Youtube videos around a topic with questions and definitions. Instead of emailing their responses, students send them back using RealSmart. As a study aid and for revision at home, it is an incredible tool.”

Future of the PLC

Progress in Houses and across the school looks set to be influenced by the PLCs.

Michael concluded: “I enjoy working in a group that is forward thinking. Everyone is passionate about creating a learning environment that is student focused: it is about taking risks while trying to make that learning environment one where students are going to thrive and be committed and enthusiastic.”

How Technology is Transforming Teaching

Technology has inspired some of the biggest changes in teaching in recent years.

At Ashby School, the arrival of Realsmart has introduced a whole new learning platform for staff and students that can be accessed anywhere with an Internet connection.

e-Learning co-ordinator Kirt Richardson, who oversees the new learning platform, said: "Realsmart takes learning outside of the classroom. As well as using it to post, share work, communicate and collaborate, students can use it to monitor their own progress and take control of their own learning.

"Lots of elements make this more than just a VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) – it allows us to pull together learning, resources and other technologies we use within Ashby School to a central point.

This can then be accessed anywhere allowing us to bridge the gap between school and home."

Realsmart offers the ability to easily create blogs, websites, rmaps (collabrative mind maps), rafl (Realsmart assessment for learning) and link in with other technologies and digital resources such as tablets and Youtube. This allows the user not only to expand their learning but also to unlock a huge amount of creative possibilities.

RealSmart combined with Google Apps for Education enables a whole class of students to work collaboratively on the same Word document, Powerpoint presentation or Excel spreadsheet at the same time.

Kirt added: "It creates a real learning community where the users can really take ownership "



RealSmart can be accessed from any device with internet access

The school's team of Year 12 and 13 digital leaders are trained to help staff and students get the most out of Realsmart and continue to explore and develop the possibilities with the latest technologies.

Hugh Gets his Degree



Hugh Birtwistle has become the latest member of staff to complete a degree in Education.

Hugh, a literacy and numeracy instructor based at Lockton House, graduated with a 2:1 BA (Hons) degree. The course gave Hugh important insights into

teaching practices and also cemented his ambitions to remain in teaching.

Hugh was a Sixth Former at Ashby School before working as a reporter for the Ashby Times and later as a communications officer for the Diocese of Leicester.

He returned to Ashby School in 2007 when friend Jonathan Jones, an instructor at the school, mentioned there was a vacancy for a Learning Support Assistant.

Hugh said: "I had always had an interest in education but I wanted to try other things first, which is why I went down the journalism route.

"I really enjoyed being an LSA. From the beginning, the school always encouraged me to progress so, when the role of literacy and numeracy instructor came up, I went for it."

Hugh's job is now working exclusively on literacy and numeracy in one-to-one sessions with SEN students. He sees about 23 students a week.

He added: "I work with some 15-year-olds who really struggle with basic numeracy and literacy. It is hard to believe they have come this far without learning these skills. These are the lowest achievers.

"My role is to get as much improvement out of them as I can which should in turn boost their grades and prospects right across the curriculum. It is about improving their chances in later life."

For Hugh's final degree course project, he focused on the different reading tests that are used to determine the reading age of SEN students.

At present, some tests are carried out online and others on paper. Hugh concluded: "Some people, for whatever reason, perform better on paper and vice versa. There are all sorts of variables

such as gender, the time of day the test is done, how much time students spend on the computer at home and so on. It was an interesting topic to investigate."

He also studied behaviourism which confirmed his belief that there is no 'one size fits all' approach. This has helped him with the school's friendship group which Hugh has run for the past four years.

Students in the friendship group visit Lockton House once a fortnight to encourage and support each other. Hugh helps them to deal with issues such as communication, friendships and self esteem, drawing on the behavioural aspects of his degree.

Hugh added: "Teacher training is the next logical step for me. The degree was about career development for me and it has confirmed my wish to stay in teaching in some form.

"I am grateful for the support I have received from Ashby School and the Advisory department, in particular. I could not have done it without the backing and support of the school."

Hugh studied at Burton College. His degree was awarded by the University of Stafford.

On the Training Menu for Today...

Ashby School's catering service has been given a five star hygiene rating by council inspectors. To maintain these high standards, catering staff undergo hours of training every year. Catering manager Nicola Wright explains some of the food safety procedures that must be observed.

The first place that Nicola Wright looks when she is visiting someone's house is the fridge.

If there is any fresh meat on the top shelf, and dairy or cooked meats on a lower shelf, the owner should brace themselves for a stern rebuke.

Nicola's passion for food hygiene extends beyond the workplace where she oversees food preparation for up to 1,000 diners every day.

Her attention to detail and to regulations is painstaking. She said: "Anything that can seriously harm you, you can't see, taste or smell.

"The emphasis of basic food hygiene is on how to store food - raw food needs to be kept separately from cooked food; fruit and veg must be washed; opened food needs to be covered. We also use colour coded chopping boards and separate knives for different food types.

"If you have not done this before, it is a minefield. Fortunately, most of the catering staff here has been doing it for years."

Every single member of catering staff must have at least a level 2 hygiene certificate.

The three supervisors – Sylvia Fowkes, Nicola Doran and Alison Devine – have level 3. Nicola has level 4, along with a raft of other qualifications.

The level 2 hygiene certificate is valid for three years after which staff must pass an annual refresher course. Nicola delivers this in-house, ordering exam papers for an end-of-course assessment. Staff take booklets home to revise.



As well as this, staff carry out on-the-job training, learning about issues such as visual inspections, critical control points and stock rotation.

All produce arriving at Ashby School is recorded and easily traceable. When one parent mistakenly claimed that her son had been poisoned by a ham roll, Nicola was able to trace the meat back to its source and rule out any food safety issues.

Nicola said: "I traced the batch of ham back to the supplier and all the correct controls had been implemented. It later turned out the boy had appendicitis but at least I knew my systems worked. I know where everything has come from.

"We can tell where a product came from, when it was opened by us, when it was delivered, who delivered it, the supplier it came from – they can trace it back to the farm it originated from.

"We don't buy cheap meat and that's something I'm very proud of."

To keep staff up to speed with new systems and regulations, Nicola subscribes to the Government's food safety website.

She believes that everyone should have at least a basic introduction to food safety, not just those who work with food for a living.

"Hygiene certificate level 2 is essentially 'how not to poison yourself with food'. I am horrified that not every student covers this as part of their formal education. In my opinion it is a basic survival skill.

"Every single person should have this knowledge because it is how to stay safe with food. For instance, a lot of people don't know the difference between 'use by' and 'best before'."

For the first time this year, Food Technology students have visited Café Express to look at the complex control systems that are in place.

Nicola added: "We gave them an idea of how a big kitchen works and the controls in place. It is the first step towards giving them a basic awareness of food safety that everybody needs."