

# Wilson Vale develops a relational approach to food at The Beacon

Over five years ago Wilson Vale gained a catering contract with The Beacon, an independent day school for boys in Amersham, Buckinghamshire.

Looking after the catering needs of 530 boys, ranging in age from four to thirteen, as well as 100 teaching and administration staff, the independent caterer also manages a busy hospitality service.

There is a tremendous sense of caring and nurturing at The Beacon so the provision of seasonal, healthy food plays an important role within that ethos.

In a single week, Wilson Vale's team at The Beacon can cater for 3,000 school lunches, 100 breakfasts and up to 300 match teas, as well as fine dining evening functions, staff room teas and up to 750 'late stays'.

With pupil numbers increasing and space limited in the existing kitchen and at the servery, The Beacon made a decision to invest in its catering operation by building a new kitchen extension with an open servery, giving the boys a view of the kitchen brigade at work and streamlining the flow of diners.

Kathryn Pell Walpole, Wilson Vale's sales director, said: "The Beacon views its 15th century listed dining hall as the beating heart of the school so it was important to get this right. It's not just about where everyone gathers to eat; it's also an educational experience for the boys

to nurture a love of good food and help them to make healthy eating choices, learn about seasonality and the importance of nutrition."

Wilson Vale recommended Catering Design Group (CDG) to design a new facility. Their brief was to provide a much more interactive experience for the pupils and staff, allowing them to view Wilson Vale's use of fresh, seasonal ingredients and the entire cooking process. This includes a window through to the baking area so that pupils can now see Wilson Vale's cakes being made.

## Contemporary servery

The servery now has a modern, softer look with contemporary 'pull-down' heat lamps on the hot counter instead of heated gantries to add to the 'open' feel. The CDG design team has even ensured that the school colours are replicated in the dining hall chairs. Most importantly, the well-designed kitchen offers the Wilson Vale brigade better equipment and more flexibility and space to stretch their craft skills.

Edward Stothard, Bursar at The Beacon said: "Over the last five years we have seen Wilson Vale enhance the school dining experience for children, teaching staff, parents and governors. The quality, range and diversity of the food is exceptional, but most importantly, we have a great relationship with our catering

team, led by Jake Herreros, whose warmth, interest and enthusiasm continues to impact on our food development strategy and on this latest investment.

"The new facility is having a huge impact on those who use the service, reducing queuing times, enhancing the presentation of the food and making it a talking point for all."

Plasma screens keep the boys informed on everything from up and coming events to seasonality and the importance of making the right eating choices.

## Fresh and seasonal

Chef manager, Jake Herreros and his team make almost everything on site using fresh and seasonal ingredients, from speciality breads, home-made yoghurts and granolas to slow-roasted meats and cakes.

One of Jake's strengths is the relationship he enjoys with the children at the school. His warm, open approach continues to win the children's confidence and encourages them to try new dishes. Menu development is on-going, and Jake attends all of the school's Food Committee meetings. He constantly challenges the boys by introducing themed menus to expose them to new flavours, tastes and textures for maximum nutrition.

"Like an army marching on its stomach, the boys need the right combination of carbohydrates and

protein to stimulate their brains and keep them sustained during their school day," said Edward Stothard.

"The care, thought and investment that has gone into our catering operation shows the importance we place on ensuring the very best for our pupils and staff."

This latest investment in the facility is also reaping benefits for school admissions as prospective parents are shown the dining hall and kitchen when they visit.

"What has been vital throughout this entire project is the support we continue to get from Wilson Vale whose operational approach and interest has given us the confidence and trust to make this major investment," said Edward Stothard.



**wilson vale**  
catering management

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