

Identifying good practice: a survey of college provision in hospitality and catering

This report presents the findings from a survey of college provision in hospitality and catering and identifies the factors that enable students to produce high-quality work and make good progress. Inspectors visited 12 colleges where provision had been judged to be good or outstanding at their most recent inspection. Examples of good practice are given and recommendations are made for further improvement.

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Executive summary

Overall success rates in courses in hospitality and catering at the colleges visited were consistently high and well above national averages. Learners were well motivated, enthusiastic and knowledgeable about working practices in the industry. Colleges had well-established arrangements to recognise and celebrate learners' success.

Teachers promoted a professional ethos and had high expectations of their learners. They made very effective use of college restaurants and kitchens as both business operations and practical learning environments to develop learners' skills to a high level. Professional cookery learners acquired a wide range of culinary techniques and front of house learners demonstrated technical, social and organisational skills of a very high standard.

Planning for lessons in the colleges visited was thorough and teachers employed good instructional techniques which took account of individual learning needs. Practical tasks were appropriately challenging and support was provided promptly for those learners who needed further assistance. Theory lessons were most effective when practice from industry was used to provide relevant underpinning knowledge, but these sessions were not always of the same standard as practical lessons. The use of information learning technology was growing; nevertheless, most teachers used it to provide information rather than as an interactive learning tool.

The monitoring and assessment of learners' progress was rigorous and effective. Teachers prepared clear briefings for assessment and assignments and learners received detailed feedback. Teachers provided clear guidance orally on how learners could improve but some written learning targets were insufficiently precise.

Close attention was given to ensuring the range of courses at each college covered the skills required by employers and gave opportunities for learners to move forward with their careers. The colleges visited offered particularly useful courses for learners aged 14 to 16 years, with good rates of progression to further training in the vocational area.

The colleges maintained strong links with employers and visits from industry practitioners to provide informative talks, and demonstrations for learners were a regular feature. Working in partnership with employers, the colleges visited provided an extensive programme of work experience and workplace visits.

Learners received good specialist advice before starting their courses. Tutors monitored learners' attendance closely, particularly those at risk of leaving courses early. A comprehensive range of support services was available to learners.

Curriculum managers focused very effectively on maintaining and improving standards of teaching and learning and ensuring that learners developed the skills needed by employers. Managers and teachers met frequently to review the

performance of subject areas. Thorough annual self-assessment led to clearly defined actions in quality improvement plans which were then closely monitored during the year.

Key findings

The following factors have helped improve the quality of provision and skills of learners in hospitality and catering in the colleges surveyed.

- Teachers successfully ensured that learners were retained and maintained good progress, leading to high attendance and success rates.
- Teachers made effective use of college restaurants and kitchens as both business operations and practical learning environments, developing learners' hospitality and catering skills to a high level.
- In the best sessions, good use by teachers of practice from industry and colleges' restaurants and kitchens ensured a clear link between theory tuition and the acquisition of hospitality and catering skills.
- Teachers and support workers took careful account in practical lessons of learners' different learning needs, providing challenging and complex tasks for the more confident, and targeted, specific help for those requiring further assistance.
- An effective range of college-based and off-site courses was matched well to the type and levels of skills required by employers.
- Growing numbers of learners aged 14 to 16 years studying at college, supported by their schools and employers, developed a good understanding of the hospitality and catering industry and progressed to further study in the subject area.
- Good identification and provision of support for additional learning needs helped learners to progress well with their studies and achieve.
- Curriculum management provided a clear and very effective focus on raising standards for learners and meeting the needs of the hospitality and catering industry for better-skilled workers.

Recommendations

The survey identified many aspects of good practice in the hospitality and catering departments visited. To improve the quality of provision further, the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) should:

- provide opportunities for teachers, support staff and managers to share the good practice available in hospitality and catering further education.

Colleges should:

- ensure that targets set in individual learning plans are precise enough to help learners improve their performance
- develop the use of information learning technology to engage learners and promote interaction between them
- ensure better correction by hospitality and catering teachers of the weak use of English in some learners' portfolios
- improve recruitment to level 3 courses
- continue to improve success rates on work-based advanced apprentice programmes and particularly for the national diploma in hospitality supervision.

Factors contributing to good-quality provision in hospitality and catering

Achievement and standards

1. At level 3, success rates were particularly high for the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) professional cookery and the NVQ hospitality supervisory. At level 2, success rates were above the national average for the NVQ in professional cookery, NVQ food and drink service, including learners on Train to Gain-funded programmes, and college work-based learning apprentice programmes. A similar pattern was present at level 1, with high success rates for the NVQ in professional cookery, NVQ food and drink service and NVQ hospitality multi-skills. Inspectors found that the success rates were similar for learners from minority ethnic groups and for all learners, and between learners aged 16 to 18 years and adults, and between male and female learners.
2. Success rates were mixed for the five colleges that offered work-based advanced apprenticeships. Success rates ranged from 28% to 79%. A major area of concern for hospitality and catering in further education nationally is the low success rate for the national diploma in hospitality supervision. This was echoed at five of the colleges visited for the survey that offered the award.
3. Colleges visited for the survey had either well-established success rates above the national average, or rates that had increased markedly between 2004/05 and 2006/07. Success rates for apprentices increased substantially between 2004/05 and 2006/07 but were more variable for advanced apprentices. Success rates for Train to Gain and its pilot precursors were above the national average between 2005/06 and 2006/07 for the two colleges offering these programmes. The trend in success rates for the national diploma in hospitality was not as positive. Rates had declined to or had remained around the average.

4. The standard of learners' work was high in the colleges visited, particularly the levels of their hospitality and catering skills. Professional cookery learners produced dishes of a very high standard, particularly in college restaurants. They used a wide range of culinary techniques, including the different methods of cookery, such as frying, roasting and braising, together with sauce and soup making and larder, butchery, fishmongering and pastry skills. Although learners' ability to cut, chop, slice and shape food with a knife quickly was good, a small minority had poor knife skills. Learners paid particular attention to the hygienic production of food.
5. Front of house learners on NVQ hospitality supervision and food and drink service courses demonstrated technical, social and organisational skills of a very high standard. They coped well with busy periods in college restaurants and front of house areas. Learners were particularly good at listening and responding to the comments and requirements of guests. Learners' self-confidence was particularly good. The standard of their work was higher than that routinely found in industry. For example, the bedrooms in a college hotel run by learners had particularly high standards of cleanliness.

Very high standard of hospitality and catering skills

A higher education provider with a substantial FE provision in hospitality and catering further education had a long-established and successful record of using realistic work environments to develop learners' vocational skills to a very high standard. A key feature of these areas was the high number of customers. This gave learners very real experience of commercial pressure. The substantial number of customers and the range of food and drink outlets provided professional cookery learners with the opportunity to handle a significant quantity of different food products. This, together with the very wide variety of dishes served at different mealtimes and in a range of environments, allowed learners to develop a range of culinary techniques, which matched the best practice found in industry. The extensive range of dining facilities available to the public gave food and drink service learners the opportunity to acquire a broad range of organisational, customer service and food and drink service skills. A particular strength was that in attaining these skills, learners' confidence as hospitality and catering practitioners increased markedly.

6. In the colleges visited, learners' enthusiasm and motivation for the hospitality and catering industry was marked. They enjoyed their studies, had high standards of behaviour and paid careful attention to their appearance. Learners made good progress compared with their prior levels of attainment and worked well on their own and in teams. Attendance rates were high and learners' punctuality was good.
7. Learners' written work was good but was not at the same very high standard as their practical skills. They made good progress with written work and produced

well-organised and well-presented portfolios. Answers to theory questions showed that learners' grasp of underpinning knowledge was secure. However, a minority of written work was characterised by regular errors in grammar and spelling which sometimes went uncorrected.

8. A well-established feature of hospitality and catering education was learners' participation in local, regional and national competitions sponsored by industry bodies and suppliers. Overall, colleges visited for the survey had substantial records of involvement and success in these competitions. These events enabled the more able learners to stretch and extend their skills to a very high level through accomplishing complex and difficult competition tasks.

Teaching and learning

9. At all the colleges visited for the survey, teaching and learning were good or outstanding. Teachers used well-written lesson plans and schemes of work for practical and theory lessons that were particularly effective but not over-detailed. In college kitchens and restaurants, the use of a range of planning materials was outstanding. These included menus, task cards, job descriptions, recipes, individual learning plans, checklists and operating instructions with clear links to awarding body criteria. Teaching and learning in college restaurants and production and skills kitchens developed learners' occupational skills to a high standard.

Planning of learning to develop learners' practical vocational skills

The menus in one college restaurant played a key part in providing very good planning for outstanding teaching and learning for professional cookery learners. Each year, teachers reviewed the different dishes on the menus offered by the local hospitality and catering industry and further afield, including consultations with local chefs. Their aim was to provide a range of dishes for the college restaurant menus that were the basis of professional cookery learning programmes. Teachers ensured that these dishes covered the range of culinary competences and techniques needed by employers and met the requirements for the NVQ. The result was a range of exciting, high standard, up-to-date dishes on the college's restaurant menus that covered the best practice in industry and, in their preparation and cooking, developed learners' professional skills to a very high level.

10. Teachers were particularly good at ensuring these areas ran like business operations and provided learning that led to the high standards of occupational skills needed by industry. Teachers and support workers were very conscious of the performance of each learner, including their strengths and areas for improvement. This was not only through good written records of learners' progress and performance but through observation of each learner's standard

of work. They used this information to provide learning in practical lessons that took account of learners' different needs: challenging and complex tasks for those who were more confident and targeted support for those requiring further assistance to develop a competence.

11. Alongside the development of vocational techniques, teachers developed learners' ability to work effectively on their own and in teams through learning activities that gave learners particular responsibility for a specific job, such as producing a set of dishes, or through group tasks, including being a member of the team that looked after a group of tables in the college restaurant.

Developing vocational skills

At one college learners ran a hotel near the centre of the local town. The hotel had eight bedrooms, function and meeting rooms, a reception, a housekeeping department, a brasserie and a sandwich bar. The facility opened all year round. During holidays, the college paid learners to operate the hotel. Level 3 learners managed the different departments and level 1 and 2 learners cooked and provided services for guests. Teachers devised the teaching and learning programmes around the operation of the hotel. Skills classes prepared learners to work in the different departments. Teachers ensured that learners' work in the departments focused on the hospitality skills required by employers and for assessment. Theory lessons used the running of the operation as the basis for developing learners' understanding and underpinning knowledge. The running of the hotel provided a particularly demanding learning environment: for example, the brasserie menu ranged from snacks to complex dishes. For learners preparing and serving this menu it provided significant levels of challenge which they overcame particularly effectively.

12. The teaching of practical skills was of a high standard. In these lessons, teachers provided good instruction and useful learning on the different components of a particular hospitality and catering competence. However, a fifth of teachers observed did not pay sufficient attention to developing learners' culinary knife skills.
13. The teaching and learning in theory lessons were generally good but not as good as in practical lessons. In the best lessons, teachers used a good range of methods to motivate and develop learners' understanding. They made good use of practice from industry and colleges' front of house areas and kitchens to provide relevant underpinning knowledge to support the acquisition of hospitality and catering skills.
14. Teachers in the colleges visited ensured that key skills tuition was of a high standard and engaged learners' interest. They accomplished this by relating key skills to hospitality and catering topics: for example, numeracy to dish costing,

and communications and information and communication technology to menu planning.

15. The use of information learning technologies was growing, with an increasing range of specialist hospitality and catering software available to teachers and learners. Information learning technology regularly featured in theory lessons, and its use in practical lessons was developing. Often in theory lessons, learners sought examples from websites to answer questions and to help them with the writing of assignments and collecting evidence to help build portfolios. Nevertheless, three quarters of teachers used information learning technology to support exposition, rather than as an interactive tool to engage learners in their learning.

Monitoring and assessment of learners' progress

16. At the colleges visited for the survey the monitoring and assessment of learners' progress was rigorous and effective. Teachers were clear about the different stage each learner had reached and they provided clear guidance orally on how learners could improve. However, written learning targets in individual learning plans in four out of 12 colleges were insufficiently precise to help learners focus on what they needed to do to improve.
17. Assessment was accurate and fair. Teachers prepared learners well for assignments and assessment and gave clear briefings. With their teachers, learners developed thorough action plans for assessment and assignments. After assessment and the completion of an assignment, learners received pertinent oral and written feedback. For NVQ assessments, assessors and learners made good use of a range of evidence, including observations; witness statements; photographs; written work; and evidence generated as it happened during work in college production kitchens, restaurants, bars and the workplace. Occasionally, assessment of work-based learners relied too heavily on assessment at college rather than in the workplace. In some cases teachers paid insufficient attention to identifying errors in the use of English in learners' portfolios.

Responsiveness to the needs of learners and employers

18. At the colleges visited for the survey, the responsiveness to the needs of learners and employers and the links with local schools were good. Courses included the skills needed by employers to run their businesses, and for learners, the competences and qualifications to succeed in the hospitality and catering industry. The range of courses offered to learners extended from level 1 to level 3, covering the main areas of hospitality and catering, together with the opportunity for learners to move to level 4 programmes, foundation degree and degree courses. Courses included mainstream and specialist provision for full-time and part-time learners and tailored commercial and publicly funded courses for individual employers, including the preparation of dishes for children

from different minority ethnic communities for the school meal service, and customer service programmes for hotels and bread-making for restaurants. Half the colleges visited offered work-based learning, and two offered Train to Gain provision. However, the number of learners on national diploma courses in hospitality supervision had declined over recent years and the demand for subjects such as reception, housekeeping and portering was low, although one college had maintained a viable reception course for some years through good links with local schools and the support of local hoteliers.

Gifted and talented chefs

One college worked in partnership with a leading professional cookery association, a group of employers in the fine dining sector and a major supermarket chain, and had a well-established advanced apprentice programme. Its aim was to provide high-level professional cookery education and training for talented young chefs. To enter the programme all learners were expected to have a minimum level of qualifications including English and mathematics and to take part in an interview and initial assessment to ascertain if they had the skills suitable for the programme. The programme offered substantial work experience with employers in the fine dining sector, training from food technologists and buyers from the supermarket on the production and sourcing of foods, and from the college on professional cookery skills and catering theory. Learners worked towards NVQ level 3 and took a practical advanced culinary skills examination. If they were successful, they received a diploma in professional cookery from the cookery association and employers in the fine dining sector offered them jobs. Employers and the supermarket provided financial support for the advanced apprentices during their training.

Specialist requirements

Over the past 30 years, a university with a substantial hospitality and catering further education provision had successfully built up specialist education and training provision for high-level pastry work. Most hospitality and catering outlets do not use many of the techniques and skills found in advanced patisserie work. However, in the fine dining sector employers require employees with highly developed pastry skills. The university offered a range of courses for this area, leading to awards at levels 3 and 4. While on programme, learners developed advanced skills in a range of complex pastry competences, including sugar boiling and shaping; chocolate, gateaux and tortens; enriched fermented goods such as brioche and savarins; petits fours; ices; and hot and cold puddings. Those completing the advanced pastry courses developed outstanding pastry skills and moved to senior pastry chef positions in the fine dining sector and to foundation degrees and degrees in culinary arts.

Through a combination of Train to Gain and mainstream adult funded provision, a college provided a training programme for the local school meals service to improve the skill levels and qualifications of staff to ensure that children received healthy and nutritious meals. All learners received an initial assessment to assess their literacy, numeracy and language needs and hospitality and catering skills. The results of this assessment, in conjunction with the employer's skill requirement for their staff, determined the type of learning programme the learners followed. The provision was delivered in the workplace and supported by sessions at the college to develop specific hospitality and catering skills, underpinning knowledge and, where appropriate, literacy, numeracy and language skills. Learners developed outstanding hospitality and catering skills, which the employer used to improve the quality and nutritional content of the meals it provided to schoolchildren. The success rates for learners on this programme over the past three years have been very high, with a very large majority achieving an NVQ in professional cookery at level 2 or an NVQ in hospitality supervision at level 3. The motivation and enthusiasm of learners on this programme were outstanding. The standards of teaching and learning were high. Teachers were particularly aware that most learners had been away from learning since they were at school and handled their concerns about returning to formal study with sensitivity. The college's relationship with the employer was particularly good.

19. Colleges visited for the survey offered a range of particularly useful courses for learners aged 14 to 16 years, including provision at levels 1 and 2. Colleges ran these courses in partnership with local schools or hospitality and catering employers. They also helped and advised on the meal service at the schools. These programmes offered learners a good insight into work in the hospitality and catering industry and they were able to begin to develop the vocational skills needed by employers. Learners cooking for and serving the public were regular features of this provision. Success and progression rates to other courses in the vocational area were high.

Links with schools

A college in an area where tourism was the major industry had very effective links with local schools to provide hospitality and catering teaching and learning to learners aged 14 to 16. The college and the schools offered the provision via two routes. The first was through a strong Young Apprentice programme. Young Apprentices visited the college weekly from their school and studied food preparation and cookery courses to level 2. The standards of learners' work and their qualification success rates were high.

The second route was through hospitality and catering teachers from the college visiting a group of local schools to support the teaching of GCSE

catering and food technology. Teachers from the college ensured that lessons reflected what happened in the hospitality and catering industry and made sure learners were starting to develop the relevant professional skills. A number of learners progressed to courses in this area at the college.

20. The colleges visited for the survey had good links with employers. These included advisory committees of local employers. In other examples, college managers and teachers sought direct guidance from those with particular job skills, such as human resources managers, guesthouse owners, pastry chefs, ships' pursers and managers from the local school meals service. Visiting speakers frequently came from industry to share good practice. Eleven out of 12 colleges had links with leading hospitality and catering practitioners, who provided talks and demonstrations or prepared meals with learners for the college restaurant. Some practitioners have given freely of their time over many years to support hospitality and catering education. These links led to colleges offering more specialist provision or bolstering mainstream courses to ensure a clearer focus on the specific skill needs of employers for particular job roles. Learners regularly visited employers' premises to see theory put into practice. Colleges, in partnership with employers, provided good-quality work experience to allow learners to experience the pace and pressure of a commercial environment.

Links with employers

A college had a number of well-established and particularly good links with local employers. For example:

For some years, the college and employers had maintained a vibrant and purposeful hospitality and catering advisory committee. The committee took a keen interest and played a strong role in providing advice on the type of learning that the college offered to learners.

Employers from a range of hospitality and catering backgrounds regularly worked with teachers to extend their and their learners' knowledge and understanding of current practices and the latest developments within industry through talks, demonstrations and workplace visits.

The college worked in partnership with a local employer, and through a supervisory course improved employees' knowledge of management practices and helped to secure further business opportunities for the employer. Teachers adapted the course for the employees to incorporate particular aspects of the employer's business so that learners could relate the course material more effectively to their work. Benefits for the employer included improved sales and services to guests.

Work experience

A college paid particular attention to the type of work placements that it offered learners. Before placement, teachers and placement officers thoroughly reviewed learners' skills, abilities and aptitudes and matched these factors to the employer. The arrangements were particularly effective in taking account of a learner's individual learning needs when on placement. For example, those learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were placed with local employers who had a good understanding of each individual's needs and could provide the appropriate support. The college placed the more confident learners with employers who operated in more testing environments, with standards for professional cookery and food and drink service that could extend the learners' skills and provide opportunities for them to use their own initiative. Often the establishments that offered these opportunities were not close to the learners' homes. In these situations, the college supported the learners financially so they could benefit from the placements, which, without this assistance, would not have been available to them.

Guidance and support for learners

21. At the colleges visited during the survey, learners received good or outstanding guidance and support. Pre-enrolment advice and guidance were of a high standard. At interview, recruitment staff provided clear briefings on the nature of courses and on assessment methods. Useful taster events supported interviews. These allowed potential learners to sample the different aspects of the hospitality and catering curriculum to ensure that the subject was the most appropriate for them. At interview, recruitment staff paid particular attention to explaining the characteristics of the hospitality and catering industry, including the unsocial hours and high staff turnover. Enrolment and induction settled learners well into their studies. In addition to practical activities and introductory information about courses, induction programmes included visits to local hospitality and catering establishments and talks from the fire and rescue service on the dangers of fire in kitchens. An effective range of careers education and guidance helped learners move to employment, further training or higher education. In addition, good links between teachers and employers helped learners obtain employment.
22. Tutors planned tutorials well to provide an effective mix of individual and group sessions. They monitored learners' attendance closely, focusing particularly on those at risk of leaving courses before completion, and took prompt, effective action when problems occurred. Colleges visited provided a comprehensive range of support services for learners. Counselling, advice and welfare support

were widely available and included well-established links with external support agencies.

23. Identification of needs and provision of support for additional learning were good, and often of a particularly high standard. Learners received an initial assessment, supported by additional checks for more complex needs, and regular further assessments by teachers as they progressed through their course. Managers allocated assistance promptly to those identified as needing support. For those groups with a high proportion of learners with additional learning needs, managers assigned support workers from the start of their programme. The range of additional learning support arrangements included mentors, individual and group support, and help in lessons. A useful feature was the employment of support workers with a background in hospitality and catering. Success rates for learners receiving support for additional learning needs were similar to those for all learners. Lesson plans recorded useful notes on the additional support a learner required.

Provision of support for additional learning needs

One college employed support workers with good hospitality skills to provide support for those with additional learning needs. The support workers, with the teachers, linked the skills needed to produce dishes from the college's restaurant menu to the support that the learner required for particular additional learning needs. For example, to help numeracy and literacy, a learner calculated the quantity of crème anglaise and nuts needed to produce pistachio ice cream for the college restaurant. The learner, with help from the support worker, used records of previous sales of the product to estimate the volume needed for production. For literacy, the learner had to write a risk assessment of the potential hygiene dangers in converting egg and dairy products into ice cream.

Learners' views

24. At the colleges visited for the survey inspectors asked learners for their views on the hospitality and catering provision they received. Learners particularly liked the good development of vocational skills and the high standard of teaching and learning. They were appreciative of teachers' high levels of experience and knowledge of the hospitality and catering industry and the high standard of specialist learning resources. Learners found that help with additional learning needs, personal support from tutors, and advice and guidance were strong and the range of courses available to them was good. Those on day release and work-based learning provision considered that the colleges had good links with their employers. Learners were concerned about too much theory assignment work on the national diploma in hospitality supervision, waiting for online testing and time wasted on the few learners who did not want to learn. In three colleges, learners identified changing and communal facilities as areas for improvement.

Leadership and management

25. Leadership and management of hospitality and catering provision visited during the survey were good at seven colleges and outstanding at five. College senior and subject area managers had a strong and very effective focus on maintaining and improving standards for learners. They ensured that most learners received very high standards of teaching and learning, particularly in the development of their hospitality and catering skills. Managers put in place a comprehensive range of support services covering additional learning needs, tutorials, counselling, guidance and welfare. They were particularly effective at providing a range of provision to meet the different learning needs of learners and the requirement of employers for a well-trained workforce.
26. Managers were less effective at ensuring the development of information learning technology beyond the provision of information, the writing of clear learning targets and the correction of English in learners' work. They were not successful at resolving issues of low recruitment and success rates for the national diploma in hospitality supervision and the variability of framework success rates for the advanced apprenticeship.

Quality improvement

27. Colleges visited for the survey had a strong culture of quality improvement, with well-established and comprehensive quality improvement arrangements. Policies and procedures set out the standards that learners were to receive, supported by systematic planning arrangements for teaching and learning. Procedures to monitor and observe the standards of teaching and learning were thorough and managers took prompt and effective action when issues arose. Staff development focused very effectively on training that improved provision, particularly for teaching and learning and the updating of subject skills. Self-assessment was rigorous, involved staff, and took note of the views of learners but not always of all employers. Self-assessment reports were thorough, with meaningful strengths and areas for improvement. They linked well to quality improvement plans. These were comprehensive and had clear actions, targets, responsibilities and success criteria. Senior, subject and course managers and teachers met frequently to monitor quality improvement plans and the performance of the subject area.
28. Managers in the colleges visited supported the quality improvement process by good use of data on learners' performance and target-setting. Data were used by managers to set targets for each course and qualification and, overall, for the hospitality and catering subject area. The achievement of targets was reviewed regularly at quality improvement meetings, with mostly effective action taken by managers to resolve any issues.

Use of targets

At one college, senior and sector subject area managers and teachers worked hard to increase and/or maintain success, retention and pass rates at a high level. A key component was the setting of targets using good quality data that managers and staff had confidence in. Targets were realistic but also challenging and were based on previous performance, national averages and the need to improve. Senior and sector subject area managers and teachers met frequently to monitor the achievement of targets and took prompt action if there were issues. Hospitality and catering success rates at the college had either increased or been maintained at levels substantially above the national average.

Resources

29. Resources at six of the colleges visited for the survey were good and at five were outstanding. The decoration, fixtures and fittings in college restaurants and bars were of a high standard. They included very good quality sideboards, tables, chairs, crockery and tableware, and up-to-date drinks dispensing and billing systems. Kitchens, pastry kitchens and larders were equipped with high-standard ranges and ovens, benching and sinks, machinery and small equipment. At three colleges the ranges were of the highest standard available. Managers, teachers and technicians ensured that most equipment was well maintained. Classrooms for theory teaching were generally good but sometimes learners were taught theory in practical areas that were not suitable for this purpose. The provision of information learning technology, in both theory and practical areas, was increasing rapidly. This included greater use of interactive whiteboards, video links from colleges to other demonstration sites, and television screens in practical areas providing information on recipes, culinary techniques and learning outcomes for lessons. Teachers were well qualified in teaching, for assessment and for their subject area. They had strong industrial experience. In one college, the kitchen floors were in poor condition and in three, the changing facilities and communal areas for learners were less than satisfactory.

Outstanding hospitality resources

The resources for learners at one college visited during the survey were outstanding. The wide variety of public dining areas included a pub, an à la carte restaurant, a brasserie, a bar and a popular catering outlet for learners' meals, snacks and refreshments. A college shop sold food products made by learners. The range of kitchens was significant, including those for the development of culinary, production and pastry skills, as well as for the preparation of food. The equipment in all these areas was outstanding. The latest and the highest standard of kitchen ranges, ovens and machinery were available to learners. Facilities in the public dining areas were particularly good, with very high grade fixtures

and fittings. Staff used these facilities well to develop very strong hospitality and catering skills in learners. The opportunity to work in an environment equipped to such high professional specifications inspired and motivated learners, who took great pride in their work.

Equality of opportunity

30. Colleges visited for the survey had a strong record of recruiting learners under-represented in education, including people from minority ethnic groups and individuals with low levels of prior attainment, additional learning needs and, particularly, from areas of high deprivation. These learners succeeded in their studies. With the exception of one college visited, colleges were at an early stage of developing courses to meet the needs of employers from the ethnic minority restaurant sector.

Cuisine of ethnic minority communities

Colleges have not traditionally recruited many learners from those working in restaurants that offer ethnic cuisine. Over the past few years, a higher education institution that provided further education established an Asian culinary arts programme to start to meet the needs of employers in this area for skilled staff. The course focused on a number of Asian cuisines, including Chinese, Indian and Thai. Learners worked towards a level 3 qualification based on developing skills in the different Asian culinary arts. Alongside the teaching of culinary skills, learners received tuition in theory, hygiene and nutrition. In establishing the programme, managers consulted with local restaurateurs in the Asian restaurant sector to ensure that the skills taught were those that were needed in their restaurants.

31. The colleges visited during the survey had clear and established arrangements for equality of opportunity. Colleges had policies and procedures in place for race, disability, promotion of equality and diversity, anti-bullying, harassment and discrimination. Staff covered these thoroughly with learners at induction and reinforced them in lessons and tutorials. During Black History Week, one college restaurant's menu featured dishes from Africa and the Caribbean, such as jerk chicken.

Catering for those with mobility difficulties and/or disabilities

A higher education provider with significant provision for further education took particular account of the needs of learners with physical disabilities and/or difficulties when planning and building kitchens. Adjustable equipment, benching, sinks and stoves allowed learners with physical disabilities and/or difficulties to access and use these facilities. Passageways between fixed equipment were sufficient for wheelchair users to pass without any hindrance. The provider, in partnership with a Mayfair hotel and charity, organised a dinner at one of the hotel's

banqueting rooms prepared by learners and supervised by leading chefs from industry. Its aim was to raise finance to fund the adaptation of one of the kitchens to improve access for learners with physical disabilities and/or difficulties.

Notes

The survey was conducted between September 2007 and March 2008 by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors. A sample of 12 colleges was selected. All of the colleges had provision in hospitality and catering that had been judged to be good or outstanding at a previous Ofsted inspection.

Useful websites

Further information on qualifications in hospitality and catering can be found on the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority website; www.qca.org.uk. These include the following.

- hospitality GCSE; www.qca.org.uk/qca_12005.aspx
- hospitality diploma; www.qca.org.uk/qca_16901.aspx
- sector subject area/tier for retail, including hairdressing and beauty therapy and hospitality and catering; www.qca.org.uk/qca_8503.aspx

The statistical first release from the Learning and Skills Council has information on outcomes in hospitality and catering for learners in post-16 education and training in England; www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/Data/statistics/sfr/.

Further information about hospitality and catering can be found on the sector skill website; www.people1st.co.uk/.

Becta provides useful e-learning resources and links to alternative sites to access further digital and interactive technology materials for use by teachers; www.becta.org.uk.

The LSIS website has useful advice, information and support on innovation and excellence in the post-16 learning and skills sector; www.lsis.org.uk.

The LSIS's Excellence Gateway is for post-16 learning and skills providers. It hosts the Ofsted database of good practice examples identified through inspection. You will also find information on suppliers of improvement services and materials to support teaching and learning; <http://excellence.qia.org.uk>.

Annex A: Colleges participating in the survey

General further education colleges

Accrington and Rossendale College, Lancashire
Bournville College, Birmingham
Bournemouth and Poole College
City College Norwich
Colchester Institute
Highbury College, Portsmouth
Kendal College, Cumbria
Stratford-upon-Avon College
Thanet College, Kent
The Isle of Wight College

Higher education institutions

Thames Valley University
University College, Birmingham (formerly the Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies).