



Following stringent
cleaning and
hygiene standards
is of paramount
importance, so
it's vital that all
members of staff
are well trained

Keeping things clean both front and back of house is essential for any catering operation and neglecting to do so can have dire consequences for everyone involved.

It may sound obvious to some, but many people working in the foodservice industry seriously underestimate the importance of proper hygiene standards. The most basic problems and solutions begin with hands. Some of the most common bacterial and viral infections are carried on the hands, and so

effective handwashing is vital.

"Absenteeism and illness due to poor hand hygiene in schools is a real problem," says Rebecca Blake, senior product manager UK and Ireland at SCA Hygiene Products. "It affects not only the teachers and children but often also involves parents having to take extra time off work. We know that teaching and monitoring hygiene is a real issue for parents as well as educational institutions."

Education and training is at the heart of a hygienic school kitchen

"Absenteeism and illness due to poor hand hygiene in schools is a real problem"

school catering facilities to follow strict cleaning regimes. "Allergen avoidance is essential

and is critical to the reduction of cold and flu viruses being spread among pupils and staff. Although most people have had the importance of hand hygiene drummed into them since early childhood, some still need a little reminder.

"By developing cleaning training and regimes that are specifically designed to consistently address food safety and general hygiene, school caterers can significantly decrease the risks of food-contaminated illnesses, protecting their students and staff," says Simon Frost, chair of CESA.

If an outbreak of a food-borne illness occurs and is caused by poor hygiene standards or improper cleaning of dining areas, it's more than just the school's reputation that's going to be hurt.

"With costs often running into tens of thousands of pounds, legal proceedings being a lengthy process and the food standards authorities subsequently maintaining a close eye on an operation, the impact on a catering provision and the operators themselves can be enormous," explains Rag Hulait, senior sales consultant at Monika.

To avoid such damaging situations occurring, school operators need to regularly monitor the cleaning processes throughout their operation. This should include records of what has been done and when, so operators can demonstrate compliance should it be required.

Although food poisoning is a major concern for school caterers, with up to 50% of children affected by allergies and intolerances, there is now even more reason for

for managing potentially life-threatening reactions and all foodservice operators need to comply with new regulations to ensure the safety of their

customers," says Brian Lavelle, UK and Ireland accounts manager at Cambro.

TRAINING

It's vital that all staff are aware of legislations and regulations surrounding the issue of food safety, from ensuring their hands are hygienically clean at all times to food safety procedures and correct cleaning methods for kitchen surfaces and equipment.

"All kitchen staff, whether it's front or back of house, should be trained on cleaning and hygiene practices," says Barry Osborn, managing director of Two Services. "It only takes one person with poor hygiene practices to make a serious mistake or to systematically erode all the good work done by others."

Food safety should be a major part of any training taking place in schools and should be provided to all members of staff as they join the team and are properly informed about the processes and procedures that are in place to monitor the effectiveness of the systems.

"With traditional monitoring systems relying solely on the operator's ability to accurately record

completion, inaccuracy or incorrect logging can be a real issue," explains Hulait. "However, with modern, automated, remote systems, this has become much less of a concern."

These types of systems can be invaluable to busy school kitchens as they feature visual and audio alerts reminding staff when particular tasks need to be carried out. This is particularly useful when English isn't someone's first language. These systems not only help the food safety side of an operation, but can help to reduce costs, too as schools can employ lower skilled staff.

"Each and every member of staff working in a kitchen environment, whether their role includes food preparation, food handling or front of house, should take responsibility for cleanliness and hygiene within a school kitchen," says Adam Hill, commercial product manager at Burco Commercial.

It's vital that all staff know exactly how to operate, maintain and clean

"Teaching and monitoring hygiene is a real issue for parents as well as educational institutions"

machinery properly as failure to do so could put hygiene standards, and children's safety, at risk. Most suppliers offer on-site training at

the time of installation, so members of catering teams should pay close attention. This should include how to operate the machine and

the importance of cleaning and how to get the best results.

"An operations manual should come with every machine that includes instructions on the importance of cleaning the machine," explains Bob Wood, director at DC Warewashing and Icemaking Systems. "This should then be positioned on the wall for all staff to follow on a daily basis."

It is difficult to stay up to date with ever-evolving legislation, but there is help out there. SCA Hygiene Products, for example, partnered with the Oxford Brookes School of Hospitality Management to create free hospitality training packs that aim to help front and back of house teams learn the correct processes behind effective

cleaning and hygiene.

Frost urges caterers to contact their local EHO or council for help and guidance. "CESA's CFSP (Certified Food Service Professional) programme gives a holistic knowledge of the way commercial kitchens operate," he notes.

Cleaning and hygiene is an area where standards simply can't afford to slip and all members of staff, whether directly handling food or not, should remain vigilant at all times. By following set procedures and logging tasks, school caterers can ensure they are meeting all regulations and legislation with minimum disruption, not to mention great peace of mind.

HAND WASHING

It has been proven that visual prompts can significantly influence a person's behaviour, so highlighting what staff already know is well worth it. SCA Hygiene Products says school cooks, catering teams, teachers and parents should all take special care to wash their hands:

- When hands are visibly dirty
- After visiting the toilet or helping a child with a toilet visit
- After being outside
- Before eating and handling food
- When arriving home
- After blowing your nose or assisting a child



Contacts

CESA	www.cesa.org.uk	Monika	www.monika.com
DC Warewashing and Icemaking Systems	www.dcproducts.co.uk	SCA Hygiene Products	www.tork.co.uk
Glen Dimplex Professional Appliances	www.burco-commercial.com	Two Services	www.two-services.com

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