

## ***Jamie Oliver's cook on North East tour for LSC***

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The learning experience is not restricted to the pupils at South Tyneside's flagship Westoe Crown Primary School. For joining the 700 pupils in study at this innovative new school are nine members of the staff assistants, who are currently studying for NVQ and VQ qualifications.

Through the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) Train to Gain service, six supervisory assistants, better known by their former title of dinner ladies, are working towards the VQ 7377 qualification, Support Work in Schools, and three classroom assistants are working towards the NVQ Level 2 qualification for Teaching Assistants.

And today (January 22) the adult learners at the school were congratulated on their new effort by Jamie Oliver's celebrity school cook Nora Sands, who featured in the hit Channel 4 series Jamie's School Dinners.

She was in the North East as a guest of the LSC to tour schools across the region to promote the benefits of training for public sector employees.

Nora, a school cook in Greenwich, London, met the staff and presented them with Train to Gain aprons to commemorate their commitment to gaining new skills and qualifications. She discussed school menus and the effort being made by the school staff to improve the nutrition and eating habits of the pupils.

The school, which is staffed by 28 teachers and is numbered among the one per cent of flagship primaries of its size in the country, identified the training needs of its 26 support staff through a profiling exercise that identified their strengths and weaknesses.

Marion Bell, deputy head teacher, said: "For some of the supervisory assistants it was their first experience of study and they all said they had enjoyed the work. An assessor supported them in completing the modules and their work was verified externally. They had journals to write and they were required to offer explanations of their work. It gave them a better understanding of their role and how they could develop it.

"The training also covered how they could encourage the children to eat more healthily and they also learnt about health and safety issues. It has done nothing but benefit the children in the school."

The supervisory assistants taking part in the training were Lorraine Arundel, Lorraine Ross, Anne Sneller, Christine Mackay, Kim Cunningham and Anne Thompson. Classroom assistants were Angela Betts, Judith Scott and Lynne Holden.

Lorraine Arundel said: "The training gave me the confidence to work with the children. I can now help them to choose healthy options at meal times and to advise on the nutritional value of different foods."

A mother with two older children, Lorraine formerly worked as a clerk in banks, offices and call centres. Prior to starting as a school assistant she had no qualifications.

She added: "As a team, the training helped is to gel. The other members of staff became colleagues, not just people you pass in the corridor. I thoroughly enjoyed gaining my qualification as a supervisory assistant and am now progressing on teaching assistant courses. I love school life and would like to take on more tasks and responsibility."

Train to Gain aims to help organisations get the training they need to stay ahead in a competitive environment by improving the skills of the workforce and has been developed as part of a wider effort by the Regional Skills Partnership in the North East to increase the productivity and further regenerate the region.

Chris Roberts, regional director, LSC North East, said: "School support staff play a vital role in the smooth running of any school and it's only right that they get the recognition they deserve. The training programmes available through Train to Gain not only enable staff, some of whom might have not gained qualifications before, to learn new skills and take on extra duties, they also ensure that support staff feel truly valued and motivated. To see so many staff from one school get involved with Train to Gain is heartening and will, I hope, encourage more to get involved once they see the benefits training brings."

A skills brokerage service jointly funded by LSC North East and the Regional Development Agency, One NorthEast, will offer impartial advice and match training needs to local providers of learning, to ensure that flexible, responsive training programmes are delivered to meet employers' needs. A core element of Train to Gain is the access to appropriate funding of Skills for Life, first Level 2 National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), Level 3 NVQ's and Management and Leadership learning opportunities.

For more information about Train to Gain, call 0800 0833312 or visit [www.traintogain.gov.uk](http://www.traintogain.gov.uk)

## **ENDS**

### **Editor's Note:**

Photo captions:

Caption 1: Nora Sands meets the staff and pupils of Westoe Crown Primary School, with Chris Roberts, Director, LSC North East.

Caption 2: The supervisory assistants at Westoe Crown Primary School, South Shields. Pictured (left to right) are: Anne Thompson, Angela Betts, Judith Scott, Lorraine Arundel, Joanne Nickerson, Anne Sneller, Lynne Holden, Lorraine Ross.

Caption 3: Nora Sands pictured with Megan Boddy, aged seven, and cook in charge Jackie McDonald.

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world-class standards. Our vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. Established in 2001, we work nationally, regionally and locally from a network of offices across the country.

In the North East the LSC and One NorthEast are working closely with other agencies to ensure that the design and delivery of Train to Gain is fully integrated with other types of support on offer to business. This includes ensuring the skills brokerage services is integrated with the Business link branded support service and that support available is fully aligned with the support to employers from other agencies in the region, such as Jobcentre Plus – who can assist with recruitment of staff.

Train to Gain service provides:

- A comprehensive analysis of an organisation's training needs, which also identifies the elements that may be applicable for funding, as well as those for which the employer must pay.
- Easy access to relevant, flexible, high quality training, delivered mostly in the workplace using an "assess-train-assess" model, which takes the employee's prior learning and experience into account.
- Information and support to access a wide range of training packages including higher level qualifications (including Level 3) and training which may not lead to a qualification.
- Information and advice to employees on qualifications and training, eligibility for LSC funded learning opportunities, financial support, skills shortages and priorities.
- Support to develop strategies to address future training needs, which are aligned to wider business objectives.
- A contribution to wage costs to help employers when staff are absent from work due to training (available only to companies with under 50 employees).

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