

For the love of housekeeping

Edina Potor is head of housekeeping at Brambletye School, a highly regarded and award-winning co-educational boarding and day school for children aged two to 13 in the West Sussex countryside, led by headmaster Will Brooks. The three 'School Rules' are Work Hard, Play Hard and Be Kind, and that certainly suits Edina.

Q You studied hospitality and tourism management in your native Hungary, then came to England with no intention of working in housekeeping. So how come you've spent the last 15 years doing just that?

I received a fantastic education in hospitality and tourism management, although it was mainly focused on the business management side. My intention was to find a role where I could work behind the scenes rather than in a customer-facing position.

When I came to England, I didn't speak any English and quickly realised there was no way I could find such work in that field without improving my language skills. However, I needed a job, and my only realistic option seemed to be housekeeping.

The first few months were difficult. After all the hard work I'd put into my studies, it was difficult to accept that I'd ended up in housekeeping. At the same time, I found the work incredibly satisfying. I thought it would be temporary until my English improved and I could move into a different position.

What changed was that I fell in love with housekeeping. I discovered that I enjoyed creating clean, welcoming environments, taking pride in the details and being part of a team that made a

real difference to guests and customers. What started as a necessity became a career that I'm passionate about.

Q Before you arrived here there were those four years working for Electrolux in Hungary as a quality control manager. How did that come about?

After finishing my studies, I struggled to find a job in hospitality. Everywhere I applied they wanted someone with experience, which I didn't yet have.

I was given the opportunity to join Electrolux at a refrigerator manufacturing plant and started on the production line, learning how the products were built, before moving into the laboratory, where I tested and inspected equipment.

The goal was to achieve the highest level of customer satisfaction by ensuring every machine met strict quality standards, both mechanically and aesthetically. I am naturally competitive, and I really enjoyed working towards that goal.

Q Was your first housekeeping job in England at Ashdown Park, the luxury hotel and country club in Sussex?

Yes. Desperate to find work, I applied for almost anything. I attended a trial shift as a kitchen porter but didn't get the job. As I was leaving, I

heard people speaking Hungarian. They helped me communicate with the housekeeping manager, who happened to be recruiting, and thankfully she offered me a position.

I'll never forget that interview. Beforehand, I had quickly learned a few essential words in English – mop, bucket and vacuum cleaner! My role involved cleaning public areas and guest rooms, and later I was trained to carry out turndown service, working alongside amazing people from all over the world.

It was there I realised I genuinely enjoyed housekeeping and the sense of achievement at the end of a shift and the pride that came from maintaining high standards. Very quickly, I knew I wanted to become the best housekeeper I could be, perhaps even a housekeeping supervisor one day.

Q You then spent several years at a hospital renowned for excellence in plastic, reconstructive, ophthalmic and maxillofacial surgery. We'd love to hear more about that.

Unfortunately, the hotel working hours no longer suited my family life, so I left with a very heavy heart and shed many tears on my last day.

Fortunately, I found another wonderful workplace. I started as an outpatient cleaner, cleaning consulting rooms, minor operating rooms and public areas during the evening shift. Once again, I was surrounded by fantastic colleagues who made coming to work enjoyable.

The hospital expanded and opened additional operating theatres and the housekeeping team was given responsibility for maintaining these specialist areas. I seized the opportunity by applying for the role of night cleaning supervisor, still a hands-on position, but with greater responsibility. In a newly created role, I was trusted to help establish team structure, working hours and cleaning schedules. It was an incredibly rewarding experience and helped me develop my leadership and management skills.

Q Now you're just coming up to nine years as housekeeping manager at Brambletye and it sounds like a brilliant place to work.

Brambletye School is a magical place. It is a beautiful site with a mixture of historic and modern buildings, all of which we take great pride

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Edina's proud to be part of Brambletye



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in looking after. I joined in 2017 as a cleaning supervisor through a contracted cleaning company.

After three years, the school decided to employ me directly and I was promoted to cleaning manager. My responsibilities continued to grow, with the most recent addition being the laundry. The role has evolved into head of housekeeping, overseeing both cleaning and laundry operations.

My day-to-day duties include planning cleaning schedules, training and supporting staff, managing suppliers, overseeing staff accommodation and dealing with lost property.

I'm incredibly fortunate to work alongside a team of 15 dedicated housekeepers who are truly amazing. We look after every area, from classrooms, boarding houses and public spaces to the swimming pool and chapel. We also provide a full laundry service, organising sports kits, preparing choir robes and ensuring pupils have everything they need.

We often help with seasonal decorations, school events and special occasions. The list is endless, but that is what makes the role so rewarding. We all take enormous pride in our work and in creating a clean, safe and welcoming environment for the children, staff and visitors who make Brambletye such a special place.

Q We know you like to name incoming equipment – for instance Theodora, the new Electrolux Professional dryer! What's all that about?

I genuinely believe machines have souls! They are just as an important part of the team as the



Dave, Stephen, Keely and Megan are a key part of the evening team

people who operate them. After all, what would we do without them?

If you want your equipment to perform reliably and last for years, you need to look after it properly. That's why I enjoy naming new machines. Theodora, our new dryer, is a fantastic addition to the team and has quickly become a favourite.

I recently took responsibility for the laundry department, which I love. We process boarding pupils' uniforms, everyday clothing, bedding and sports kits, as well as dealing with lost property, clothing repairs and alterations.

One of my current projects is creating a more sustainable laundry operation. This includes planning a new laundry building, reviewing workflows and researching new equipment that will improve efficiency, reduce environmental impact and support the future growth of the school.

Q A school seems a good spot for you as you've continued to increase your qualifications. Recently you attended the UKHA Scholarship Programme at The Grand York. What was that experience like?

I am incredibly fortunate that both the school and my line manager actively support my professional development.

Throughout my time at Brambletye, I've attended cleaning exhibitions, conferences and training programmes. I've completed the BICSc Supervisor Certificate, obtained my IPAF licence, undertaken Decontamination and Biohazard Cleaning training with Ultima Cleaning Academy and, most recently, participated in the UKHA Scholarship Programme.

I was honoured to be selected as one of the UKHA delegates. It was a truly inspiring experience and one of the highlights of my career so far. This was an opportunity to learn from some of the industry's most respected professionals, exchange ideas and gain valuable insights into the future of housekeeping and hospitality.

Meeting people who share the same passion for housekeeping reminded me how important

our profession is and how much there is still to learn and develop. I came away feeling motivated, inspired and proud to be part of such a supportive industry.

Liz Lycette left us with an important quote: "Never give up!" These words are 100 per cent true. Achieving your goals often takes time, perseverance, and resilience. Sometimes, you must experience failure before you can learn, grow, and ultimately rise above it.

A school environment is different from working in a hotel, but the core principles remain the same. My guests are the children and staff members, and I'm committed to providing them with the highest standards of care, comfort and service. Every course, qualification and learning opportunity helps me improve both personally and professionally, allowing me to lead my team more effectively and continue raising standards.

Q Finally, even busy housekeepers have some downtime. What do you enjoy doing away from work?

Spending time with my family and going for walks together whenever we can. My work is very people-focused and often quite demanding, so in my free time I appreciate the simple things, especially peace and quiet.

I love nature and have a fascination with birds. I can happily sit and watch them for hours. There's something very calming about observing them and taking time to slow down and appreciate the world around us.

And whether it's through training courses, books or educational podcasts, I'm constantly looking to expand my knowledge. I have a particular interest in psychology and human behaviour. I find it fascinating how the mind works, what motivates people and how we interact with one another.

I suppose that curiosity is one of the reasons I have continued to develop throughout my career. I enjoy learning new skills, meeting new people and finding better ways of doing things. For me, learning never really stops.



Edina was honoured to be selected as one of the delegates at the UKHA Scholarship Programme

Team members showcase their creativity and collaboration during a team-building challenge, designing and modelling outfits made entirely from bin liners

