

**How to achieve
the Bronze, Silver
and Gold awards**

Criteria and guidance



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We are always keen to hear about what you have been doing, so please share your experiences with us on your [Food for Life Partnership](#) blog and keep in touch with your Regional Coordinator.

www.foodforlife.org.uk

Bronze for transforming food culture

Food leadership and school food culture

- Our School Nutrition Action Group has led a review of food culture in our school, and actions have been agreed.
- We monitor school meal take up and we are taking action to maximise the take up of free school meals.
- We consult with our pupils and parents on school meal improvements.
- We keep parents informed of lunch menus and **Food for Life Partnership** activity and invite them to attend our school lunches.
- We encourage our pupils to suggest improvements to the dining experience and we implement the best ideas.
- Our lunchtime supervisors promote a calm and positive dining experience and help our pupils with food choices.
- We have made a commitment to phase out flight trays.
- Free drinking water is provided for our pupils throughout the school day.

Food quality and provenance (delivered in partnership with our caterer)

- Food on our menu does not contain any undesirable additives or hydrogenated fats.
- We make sure that at least 75% of dishes on our menu are freshly prepared.
- We use meat that is farm assured as a welfare minimum. We use eggs from cage-free hens.
- Our menus are seasonal and we highlight in-season produce.
- Our menus cater well for all dietary needs in the school population.
- Continuous professional development is available to our catering staff, including training in fresh food preparation.
- A member of our catering staff has been encouraged to get involved in food education activities.

Food education

- We use the topic of healthy and sustainable food as a theme for assemblies.
- Our pupils have the opportunity to take part in cooking activities, and this is linked to wider learning.
- Our pupils have the opportunity to grow and harvest food and make compost, and this is linked to wider learning.
- We organise an annual farm visit, and this is linked to wider learning.

Community and partnerships

- We hold an annual event on a food theme for our pupils, parents and the wider community.
- We make efforts to actively engage parents and/or the wider community in our growing and cooking activities.
- We share **Food for Life Partnership** learning with local schools, the wider community and other partners.

Silver for transforming food culture

Food leadership and school food culture

- Our governors have signed off a school food policy with a timetable for action.
- We give lunchtime a clear priority in our school day, and timetabling clashes are avoided.
- We ensure take up of school meals by pupils registered for free school meals is 90% or higher, and we are taking action to raise general school meal take up.
- We have made sure that key teachers or others have skills needed to lead gardening and cooking activities and ensure basic food hygiene.
- We work with parents to discourage unhealthy snacks or lunch box contents.
- We invite parents and/or community groups into our school to eat with our pupils.
- We don't use flight trays.

Food quality and provenance (delivered in partnership with our caterer)

- We include a range of locally sourced items on our menu.
- We include a range of certified organic or MSC-certified items on our menu.
- We use poultry, eggs and pork that are produced in line with standards set for the Freedom Food scheme as a welfare minimum **or** we make sure that at least 10% of our ingredients are from a certified organic source, including organic animal products, and we will reduce the amount of poultry and pork we serve.
- We don't serve fish that is on the Marine Conservation Society 'Fish to Avoid' list.
- We display information about the origins of the fresh produce we use.
- We make sure that at least one product on our menu or in vending machines meets Fairtrade standards.

Food education

- We have established a cooking club and our pupils are cooking with seasonal, local and organic ingredients.
- We ensure pupils in our garden group and/or a class are growing fruit, vegetables and herbs organically.
- We have produce from our school garden available at least once a term for pupils to eat or cook with.
- Our pupils explore the ethical and environmental issues around food choices and this is linked to changes in our school meals.
- One or more of our year groups keep in touch with a local farm throughout the year.
- We organise at least one annual visit to or from small local food businesses.

Community and partnerships

- We hold events to involve parents and/or the wider community in growing and cooking activities.
- We actively encourage our pupils and their parents to grow and cook their own produce at home.
- Our pupils share **Food for Life Partnership** learning with local schools, the wider community and other partners.

Gold for transforming food culture

Food leadership and school food culture

- Our pupils all have the opportunity to sit down to lunch every day.
- Our take up of school meals is over 60% OR has increased by more than 20% since we enrolled with the **Food for Life Partnership**.
- We are working with our caterer to reduce and manage food waste.

Food quality and provenance

(delivered in partnership with our caterer)

- We make sure at least 30% of the ingredients we use are from a certified organic or MSC-certified source.
- We source at least 50% of our ingredients locally.
- We make sure that certified organic meat, dairy products or eggs feature on our menu as animal welfare best practice.
- We are taking steps to increase the take up of non-meat dishes and to promote a balanced, sustainable diet.

Food education

- We are committed to providing a minimum of 12 hours of cooking lessons a year by 2011 for all our pupils up to and including key stage 3.
- All our pupils have the opportunity to participate in organic food growing during their time at our school.
- We actively involve our pupils in planning the food growing calendar and maintaining the growing area using organic practices.
- Our pupils have the opportunity to take part in a programme of farm-based activities throughout the farming year.

Community and partnerships

- Our parents and/or the wider community are actively involved in growing and cooking activities in our school.
- Our parents can buy or collect organic and/or local produce at our school, or we direct them to alternative local outlets.
- Food and cooking education is available in our school to parents and community members out of school hours.
- We host regular visits about the **Food for Life Partnership** from other schools and stakeholders.

Bronze for transforming food culture

Food leadership and school food culture

> Our School Nutrition Action Group has led a review of food culture in our school, and actions have been agreed

A School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG) is a school-based alliance that works to review and improve the school food service and adopt a truly whole school approach to food education and culture.

The focus of your SNAG goes beyond school lunches to include practical food education for pupils and how to involve the wider community. Key areas for the group to consider are food, sustainability and healthy eating. Feel free to change the name of the SNAG to something that fits your school.

Every member of the school community can be part of the SNAG – your catering staff (including cook), pupils from a broad age range and at least one each of the following:

- Member of the Senior Management Team
- Member of the teaching staff (including a food technology teacher at secondary level)
- Lunchtime supervisor
- Parent or governor
- Community representative.

Getting started

Review what's already happening in your school on food issues. Then, together, make an action plan for the areas that need improvement, taking into consideration the priorities of your school community. Actions might include developing plans to grow food organically in the school grounds, using this produce in cooking activities and creating links to local farms and food producers so that pupils can find out more about where food comes from.

> We monitor school meal take up and we are taking action to maximise the take up of free school meals

A key issue in many schools is that children who are entitled to free school meals do not apply for them. One of the reasons for this is the perceived social stigma attached to claiming free school meals. In some cases, parents are simply not aware that they are entitled to claim.

Getting started

Raise awareness of entitlement to free school meals through your school's communication with parents, making sure it is easy to apply. Explore ways of allowing pupils that claim free school meals to do so without standing out from other pupils so that issues of stigma do not arise.

Enrol with the School Food Trust Million Meals Campaign to track your school meal take up.

<http://millionmeals.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk>

Chestnuts Primary School in Haringey, London has been actively encouraging parents of children eligible for free school meals to take up that entitlement. As well as putting reminders in the school newsletter, they also display signs in a number of languages. They soon hope to be able to offer assistance to parents in completing the necessary forms. Currently, take up of free school meals is over 90%.

> We consult with our pupils and parents on school meal improvements

Changes to make school menus healthier and more sustainable are important, but it is equally important that pupils and parents do not feel these changes have been imposed without explanation or consultation. Get pupils and parents involved in planning the changes so they can understand the reasons for them.

Invite ideas and feedback from your pupils and parents via surveys, questionnaires, notices in your school newsletter or organise tasting events. Parents may wish to come and sample the food that their children are eating.

Getting started

Try asking parents and pupils to recommend healthy dishes that are popular at home and supply recipes to the school.

This has been a real success at Millfields Community School in Hackney, London, where many such dishes were incorporated into new menus that comply with the statutory food-based standards. As a result, the menu is as culturally diverse as the school population, and take up has risen.

> We keep parents informed of lunch menus and Food for Life Partnership activity and invite them to attend our school lunches

Parents and guardians are often keen to get involved and may appreciate hearing about menus and any food-related learning activities that their child, or they themselves, could get involved with.

Communicate your menus on your school website, in your newsletter or on your school notice board, and promote information on where the food has come from, as well as including messages from your catering staff.

Getting started

Providing pictures or feedback of the school lunches on your website is a good way to keep parents in the loop. You can share information about growing and cooking activities and farm links online, in the school newsletter or on bulletin boards. Many schools find that having parents present at lunchtimes helps promote a positive, sociable dining experience for everyone. Try having a specific day of the week on which parents know they are welcome

to join the children at lunch. Another popular idea is to have tasting sessions at parents' evenings.

Corpus Christi Primary School in Oldham includes a food education section in their newsletter and often sends home recipes that pupils have made in school.

> We encourage our pupils to suggest improvements to the dining experience and we implement the best ideas

Actively consult your pupils about possible improvements to the dining experience on an annual basis, and agree one or more new actions based on their suggestions.

Getting started

Lunchtimes at school provide an opportunity to enjoy healthy food and acquire good food habits and social skills. It can sometimes be difficult for caterers and schools to manage the lunch break within the confines of limited dining space, which may also have multiple uses. Lots of pupils complain of long queuing times, noisy halls, shrill whistles and confusion over the food on offer, making the dining room an unpleasant place to be. Asking them for their ideas for improvements and acting on the best of these can be a great way to win their support and make simple but effective changes.

St John the Baptist School in Hackney, London, has set up a Food Forum made up of six very charismatic and inspiring girls from Years 4-6. Last year the Food Forum was responsible for changing the dining room to make it a pleasant place to eat. This year the forum is in charge of talking about food at assemblies, organising a healthy tuck-shop, checking packed lunches for healthiness and, not least, representing the pupils' opinions of the school meals.

Rokaya, Year 6, explains: "We want to put up a food table outside in the playground with questionnaires because we don't really know whether the children like the food or not. We think it will be nice for our cook Donna to know, so she doesn't have to cook food that will just go to waste."

When asked why she decided to be part of the Food Forum, Helen, a Year 4 pupil, answers: "I wanted to be part of the Food Forum because I think I can make a difference to the food in our school."

> Our lunchtime supervisors promote a calm and positive dining experience and help our pupils with food choices

Lunchtime supervisors can promote healthy choices and manage lunchtime behaviour through positive reinforcement. They can also play a key role in minimising noise and stress at lunchtimes and in prompting pupils to try different foods to ensure a balanced diet.

Getting started

A good dining experience can be encouraged via positive reinforcement and recognising good behaviour. Encouraging staff to eat with the children (by subsidising meals maybe) and a greater recognition of the role of midday supervisors in school, along with training, can help encourage them to work as a team with your school and catering staff to promote a better environment. Try involving your supervisors in food events and other aspects of school life.

> We have made a commitment to phase out flight trays

Using separate china or plastic plates and dishes for the main meal and dessert helps teach children important social skills and makes meals more appetising.

Plastic flight trays may be practical and efficient for caterers but they do not encourage children and young people to develop good eating skills. Food often spills from one tray compartment to another and pupils may be tempted to eat their pudding first.

Note: Exemptions to this rule may apply in the case of pupils with special needs or very young pupils (ie aged four and under). The use of disposable plates does not meet our criteria.

Getting started

Why not ask your pupils to help choose the new china or plastic plates?

Damson Wood Infant School in Solihull was initially very nervous about switching to flight trays, especially as their children are very young. However, after consultation they decided to give it a go and they have not looked back.

Headteacher Marilyn Phipps recalls: "When adults visited the school they would be given a plate to use; however, our children were eating from plastic trays and we felt this wasn't good enough. We worried the children wouldn't be able to manage, but they have been absolutely fine, and they all love the new plates. If a four-year old can do it, anyone can!"

> Free drinking water is provided for our pupils throughout the school day

Good hydration helps children and young people to maintain a healthy weight and improves attention and concentration. It can also help increase exercise capacity and fitness levels and reduce the risk of chronic disease.

Quality drinking water should be readily available – not from taps and drinking fountains located in the toilet areas. Make sure that free drinking water is available in your dining room at lunchtime, together with sufficient glasses or cups.

Getting started

Try installing tamperproof water fountains in your dining room or supplying reusable water bottles to every pupil so they can drink throughout the school day. Contact your regional water company – many have initiatives linked to drinking water provision in school.

Food quality and provenance

(delivered in partnership with our caterer)

> Food on our menu does not contain any undesirable additives or hydrogenated fats

Make sure that your menus do not contain the following additives:

Colourings

- E110 (sunset yellow)
- E104 (quinoline yellow)
- E122 (carmoisine)
- E124 (ponceau 4R)
- E132 (indigo carmine)
- E133 (brilliant blue FCF)
- E102 (tartrazine)
- E107 (yellow 2G)
- E120 (cochineal)
- E123 (amaranth)
- E131 (patent blue V)
- E151 (black PN)

Flavourings/enhancers

- E621 (monosodium glutamate)
- E635 (sodium 5 – ribonucleotide)

Sweeteners

- E951 Aspartame
- E950 Acesulfame K
- E954 Sodium saccharine

Preservatives

- E211 (sodium benzoate)

Don't forget to check your custard powders, gravy granules and drinks as they are often found in these products.

This list includes all the additives shown to cause behavioural problems in the research conducted by Southampton University in 2007 that prompted the Food Standards Agency to advise parents of hyperactive children that they be avoided. It also includes other additives prevalent in children's food that have been identified as problematic by the Hyperactive Children's Support Group.

> We make sure that at least 75% of dishes on our menu are freshly prepared

At least 75% of the dishes on your menu should be freshly prepared from unprocessed ingredients in your school kitchen. If your school doesn't have its own kitchen, then food freshly prepared at a nearby school or catering facility for serving in your school also meets this criteria.

The **Food for Life Partnership** uses a common sense definition of 'unprocessed ingredients' to include raw basic ingredients such as fresh/frozen fruit and vegetables, fresh/frozen meat or fish, pasta, rice, flours, pulses and beans. Unprocessed foods are fresh, homemade and natural, as defined by the Food Standards Agency. Some other foods that have been subject to primary processing are included in our definition of unprocessed, such as pasta, milk, good quality cheese and sausages and wholegrain bread.

The following basic ingredients may be used in dishes counted as 'freshly prepared':

- Fresh or frozen vegetables, and canned sweetcorn, pulses or beans
- Fresh, dried or canned (no syrup) fruit, including tinned tomatoes
- Fresh or frozen meat which can be pre-diced or minced
- Fresh or frozen dairy products, including ice cream and yogurt
- Sausages (minimum meat content 60%)
- Cheese (unless highly processed)
- Pasta and rice
- Bread, rolls, pizza bases and wraps with some wholegrain flour content
- Stock cubes or bouillon (but they must be free from additives on our 'undesirable' list)
- Bread mix, custard powder and gravy mix (but they must be free from additives on our 'undesirable' list).

The following may not be included in a dish that is counted as freshly prepared:

- Pre-prepared potatoes (where chlorine-based whitening agents have been used)
- Reconstituted or pre-cooked meat
- Packet mixes, with the exception of bread mix, custard powder and gravy mix
- Dried egg or milk products
- Jelly cubes and crystals
- Pre-prepared sauces
- Baked beans
- Ready-made pastry

Getting started

To calculate your percentage, count all the 'freshly prepared' dishes on the menu rotation and calculate this as a percentage of the total number of dishes.

> We use meat that is farm assured as a welfare minimum. We use eggs from cage-free hens

This is a minimum specification. If you are using free range, Freedom Food or organic meat or egg products you are exceeding this specification.

Note: Farm assurance is not a guarantee that eggs are from cage-free hens. Your caterer must therefore specify cage-free eggs in addition to farm assurance.

If food is 'farm assured' it means it was produced on farms that are inspected to ensure that they meet the assurance scheme standards. These standards cover issues such as food safety, traceability, production methods, environmental protection and animal welfare.

The most popular schemes include Assured British Meat, Assured British Pigs, Assured Chicken Production, Assured Dairy Farms, Farm Assured Welsh Livestock (FAWL) and Quality Meat Scotland (QMS). If a product carries the Red Tractor logo, you can be sure that it is farm assured.

Various other whole supply chain assurance logos also indicate farm assurance – British Quality Assured Pork,

Charter Quality British Bacon, Charter Quality British Ham, British Quality Assured Pork Sausage, and the EBLEX Quality Standard Mark which can be found on beef and lamb. Due to the requirement for annual inspections for all farms that wish to sell 'farm assured' food you can have greater confidence that minimum standards on animal welfare are being met in line with UK legislation when you specify meat and eggs that are farm assured.

Getting started

For further detailed guidance on how to source farm assured produce and eggs from cage-free hens, please refer to our briefing *Frequently asked questions about animal welfare assurance*, available at www.foodforlife.org.uk

> Our menus are seasonal and we highlight in-season produce

Use and highlight a number of in-season fruit and vegetables in your menus. Eating UK produce that is in season is one of the best ways to reduce your school's carbon footprint, by cutting 'food miles' and avoiding energy-guzzling heated greenhouses. Currently, 91% of fruit and 50% of vegetables in the UK are imported.

Note: Alternatively, your menus can feature a generic specification such as 'seasonal vegetables' or state clearly that fruit and vegetables are subject to seasonal variation.

Getting started

Eating in-season produce also means you eat food at its best, and it is often more affordable too. If your menus are seasonal it becomes far easier to source fresh produce locally. Some produce such as rhubarb has shorter seasons, and this could be used as a hook for pupils to learn about seasonality. Why not use some of the produce from your school garden – this may also encourage more pupils to try school meals.

Guidance on how to make seasonal vegetable and fruit substitutions without needing to repeat your menu's nutrient analysis is available at www.foodforlife.org.uk

> Our menus cater well for all dietary needs in the school population

Make sure that you offer menus:

- that reflect the ethnic make up of your school
- that offer vegetarian options that are nutritionally balanced and diverse, avoiding over-reliance on cheese
- where your catering staff can clearly identify the ingredients of all dishes served for allergy sufferers.

Getting started

If children are to be encouraged to eat a balanced, healthy meal at school it can help if at least some of the food served is familiar to them. This might mean adapting some popular so-called 'junk' foods so that they contain well-sourced, wholesome ingredients.

Menus that reflect the ethnic make up of your school will encourage the whole school population to feel comfortable and may also give your pupils the confidence to try other, less familiar food.

> Continuous professional development is available to our catering staff, including training in fresh food preparation

Offer practical training in fresh food preparation and seasonal menu planning to your heads of kitchen and other catering staff as part of a programme of continuous professional development. This can be done within the kitchen rather than course-based. Keep a record of training for your catering staff on a training note or schedule.

Getting started

Your catering staff may benefit from an opportunity to refresh their skills in fresh food preparation and learn new skills relating to nutrition, seasonal menu planning and food education. Take advantage of opportunities to acquire relevant qualifications becoming available via new government-supported regional training centres. Or how about giving your catering staff the opportunity to participate in school visits to local farms to see where the food comes from.

> A member of our catering staff has been encouraged to get involved in food education activities

Providing opportunities for your catering staff to contribute to food education can help pupils make the desired connections and it will also keep your staff motivated and inspired.

Ensure that all your catering staff are able to tell pupils and parents about what on the menu is in season, local and organic; and encourage members of your catering staff to get involved in food education beyond the dining room.

Getting started

Interaction between your catering staff and pupils can happen in both the kitchen and the classroom. Why not organise food-themed assemblies and lessons or after-school cooking and growing clubs. Some catering staff will be more keen and confident to take this opportunity than others, and your encouragement and support will be vital. Catering teams should be paid for any additional hours they do.

The school cook at Calthwaite Primary School in Penrith delivers cooking afternoons to small groups of pupils in the school dining room using the kitchen facilities to cook the food. She often makes recipes from the school menu to encourage take up of school meals.

And at St Peter's Primary School in Wem, Shropshire, school cook Jo Jones is regularly involved in assemblies and often visits classes to talk about school meals and balanced diets. She says: "Getting involved in education adds an extra dimension to my job and makes me feel important and valuable in the school. It's the part of my job I enjoy the most and it helps keep me thinking about the bigger picture and the part I have to play in that."

Food education

> We use the topic of healthy and sustainable food as a theme for assemblies

Assemblies provide an excellent opportunity to explore ideas around food culture. Ideally, these themes should be addressed regularly, so that they become part of ongoing discussions around the school, rather than being restricted to a one-off event such as a food week.

Hold assemblies that reinforce the messages of healthy eating and climate-friendly food at least once a term.

Getting started

Encourage your pupils and teachers to report on the work they are doing in class and communicate positive food messages to the wider school community. You could invite speakers such as your link farmer, cook or local gardening group in to school, and tie these assemblies into national events or days, such as Apple Day on 21 October or World Environment Day on 5 June.

> Our pupils have the opportunity to take part in cooking activities, and this is linked to wider learning

Develop a 'curriculum map' that identifies how practical activities such as food preparation and cooking can be used to reinforce learning. Link the recipes to what is being grown in your school garden and food being produced on your local farm wherever possible. A mapping exercise will help highlight how cooking can be linked across the curriculum.

Getting started

Opportunities to teach cooking and related activities within the curriculum exist in many areas e.g. weighing and measuring links in well with numeracy. Cooking can also be related to other areas such as Design and Technology, Science, Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Citizenship, History and Geography, and developed in the context of school or class celebrations or festivals.

Register your school with the Focus on Food Campaign at www.focusonfood.org and receive a free copy of COOK SCHOOL magazine twice yearly. It contains really useful articles about food and food issues, food culture, recipes and cooking skills.

> Our pupils have the opportunity to grow and harvest food and make compost, and this is linked to wider learning

There is no better way to get children and young people interested in eating fruit and vegetables than by giving them the opportunity to grow some themselves. Growing organically and learning to compost also provides experiences that link together the issues of health and sustainability. In making compost, your pupils will be helping to reduce kitchen waste, build up a healthy soil, provide essential nutrients to the plants and those who eat them, and help the plants resist attack from pests and disease.

Develop a 'curriculum map' that identifies how growing activities can be used to reinforce learning outside the classroom and link to cooking – how can the produce grown in the school grounds be incorporated into recipes used in cooking lessons?

Getting started

As a starting point, give your garden group or class the opportunity to plant simple food crops such as tomatoes or potatoes and harvest them when ready. Use suitable organic waste from around school to begin to make compost. When you join the **Food for Life Partnership** we will send you a Growing Manual full of tips and advice. Your school will also become a member of 'Garden Organic for Schools'.

At Greenfields Community School in Nottingham every class and the gardening club has a vegetable growing bed. There is special focus on teaching gardening skills to Year 3 and 4 pupils, and growing achievements have benefited all other areas of the curriculum, enhancing subjects ranging from Science to French.

> We organise an annual farm visit, and this is linked to wider learning

By giving children and young people the opportunity to visit a farm we encourage them to become intelligent and responsible food consumers. Learning first-hand from a farmer about the realities and challenges of food production can be an important formative experience, improving knowledge and building interest in the consumption of healthy and fresh produce. Often a school trip may be the first time many pupils have been on a farm visit.

Develop a 'curriculum map' that identifies how farm visits can be used to reinforce learning outside the classroom and, wherever possible, incorporate food being produced on the farm into recipes for cooking at school that complement fruit and vegetables being grown in the school grounds.

Organic farms can provide wide-ranging learning opportunities because they tend to be mixed farms with both crops and livestock. As well as an opportunity to learn about farming itself, the farm provides an excellent 'outdoor classroom' that your teachers can use to inspire pupils around a wide range of subjects, such as animal welfare, the importance of wildlife, sustainability or farming as a business.

Getting started

Prior to a farm visit, it can be of great benefit to pupils to have the opportunity to do some preparatory research on farming and the farm itself. For example, your pupils might prepare a set of interview questions for the farmer to find out more about daily life on a farm and how the farmer helps the environment. Don't forget that after the visit there will be other opportunities for follow-up work linked to the curriculum.

"Seeing the seasons on a farm gives children a valuable and lasting experience." Mark Lea, farmer, Greenacres Farm, Shropshire

Community and partnerships

> We hold an annual event on a food theme for our pupils, parents and the wider community

Holding an event with a food theme can be a great hook to get pupils and parents actively participating and invariably pays dividends in terms of attendance by parents.

Create opportunities to celebrate food through events that are open to and enjoyable for your pupils, parents and the wider community.

Getting started

A remarkable range of imaginative food events takes place in schools around the country – from taster sessions at parents' evenings to cooking demonstrations by local chefs. Many schools find using an international theme can create an interesting and popular food event whereby classes study the food and make recipes from different countries. Ideas for community events are available at www.foodforlife.org.uk

Surrey Square Junior and Infants Schools in London held an International Extravaganza event to celebrate the food and culture from other countries. Parents were invited in to the school to cook with the pupils during the day and share their food skills with other parents in the evening. Each class focused on a different country, making two dishes for the evening celebration, and every child in the school had the opportunity to take part.

The majority of parents – over 450 – attended, making the day a real success. This level of engagement was unprecedented so the schools have decided to make it into an annual event.

> We make efforts to actively engage parents and/or the wider community in our growing and cooking activities

Schools can be seen as education centres in their widest sense by providing people of any age, ability and outlook with a tremendous sense of wellbeing and achievement.

Use your newsletter, website, visits or dedicated letters to promote existing activities and new opportunities to involve parents and community members in changing food culture. Involving parents and community members in cooking and growing projects increases the likelihood of them being replicated at home.

Getting started

Parents and community groups may well provide a valuable resource of volunteering time or in-kind contributions such as gardening tools or ingredients for cooking.

Oldfield Park Infants School in Bath has had great success with its cooking bags which contain utensils, recipes and a comments book. Pupils can reserve a bag to take home and cook with their family in the evening, and they are encouraged to write comments on their cooking experience with their family. This has really taken off and the books are now a valuable resource, bursting with inspirational photos and ideas.

> We share Food for Life Partnership learning with local schools, the wider community and other partners

The **Food for Life Partnership** is all about sharing learning and involving others in your work to transform food culture.

Getting started

You may want to:

- Use existing local networks and forums such as extended schools clusters to share your **Food for Life Partnership** learning.
- Present your work at local headteachers' meetings and share the benefits.
- Present to local Healthy Schools clusters, learning communities and other stakeholder local groups.
- Invite other schools to engage with **Food for Life Partnership** or work towards a Bronze award collaboratively.

And what's the benefit to your school?

- You will be supporting and encouraging a culture of local collaboration and partnership working.
- You will gain local credit for your achievements.
- Collaboration with local schools on **Food for Life Partnership** work makes things happen, such as establishing a cooking club or working together to meet the **Food for Life Partnership** food quality and provenance criteria.
- You will be developing exciting learning opportunities for pupils, teachers, communities and caterers.
- You will be able to promote your school as a leader of food culture through the local media.
- This is an opportunity for professional development for your staff.

St John's Primary School in Midsomer Norton, Bath and North East Somerset, held a series of evening cookery classes aimed at developing the cooking skills of staff in neighbouring schools. The sessions were opened out to all schools across the Local Authority and beyond. All Food for Life Partnership schools were able to attend for free, but any staff from non-Food for Life Partnership schools were required to contribute to the cost. The sessions were well attended and, as a result, St John's successfully recruited several schools to the Food for Life Partnership, helped develop cooking skills and forged close links with their neighbouring secondary school.

Silver for transforming food culture

Food leadership and school food culture

> Our governors have signed off a school food policy with a timetable for action

Develop a whole school food policy through your SNAG, outlining your commitment to making food quality and education a central priority.

Getting started

By ensuring engagement from the whole school community, including pupils, parents, carers and catering staff, you are more likely to develop a long-lasting approach. Support from your school governing body is essential. A whole school food policy is a shared, evolving document that ensures healthy and sustainable eating messages are consistently championed through the example set by your school and the wider community.

> We give lunchtime a clear priority in our school day, and timetabling clashes are avoided

Make healthy eating a priority and ensure that timetabling allows all your pupils time to sit down to eat.

Getting started

Encourage your pupils to sit down for long enough to have an opportunity for social interaction and good digestion. Pupils involved in extra-curricular activities should also have an alternative eating time.

> We ensure take up of school meals by pupils registered for free school meals is 90% or higher, and we are taking action to raise general school meal take up

It is important for all your pupils to have good food at lunchtime in school to enable them to concentrate on learning in afternoon lessons. Free school meal take up is measured by taking the average percentage of pupils registered for free school meals that are taking them over the current half term or term.

Note: This criterion does not apply to sixth forms.

Getting started

If you haven't already, enrol with the School Food Trust Million Meals campaign for ideas on how to increase your school meal take up. Your SNAG, pupils and catering staff could also generate some ideas.

St James Junior School in Whitehaven works hard to ensure that all of their pupils eligible for a free school meal take up the opportunity and their take up is currently 100%. The school publishes the information regarding qualifying criteria in the newsletter each term and provides the information in the enrolment pack for new starters.

> We have made sure that key teachers or others have skills needed to lead gardening and cooking activities and ensure basic food hygiene

Carry out a food skills audit to identify whether any of your teachers or community members need training to enable them to lead cooking or growing activities in your school with confidence. Develop a training schedule to meet these needs.

Getting started

Good training and resources will give your teaching staff and others confidence in their roles. With cooking in particular, it is important to consider whether teachers or other volunteers possess the skills and knowledge to teach skills safely. Careful precautions and simple techniques can ensure that all cooking activities, including knife skills, can be conducted safely. Useful resources and links to training are available at www.foodforlife.org.uk

Twerton Infant School dedicated two of their INSET days to food safety and hygiene training. All staff attended a course run by their local authority and now possess certificates showing they have passed a test in basic food hygiene. Any new staff will also be given the

opportunity to attend a training course.

> We work with parents to discourage unhealthy snacks or lunch box contents

A study by Leeds University which was commissioned by the Food Standards Agency revealed that if the nutritional standards set for school meals were applied to packed lunches only 1% would comply. Only one in five packed lunches contained any vegetables or salad and about half included an item of fruit.

Actively seek the support of parents for a healthy snack or lunch box campaign in your school. Unhealthy lunch boxes or brought-in snacks undermine what you are trying to achieve in transforming your school food culture.

Getting started

One way to tackle this is to ask parents and pupils to suggest and agree shared principles for a healthy lunchbox. Try holding healthy lunchbox competitions and assemblies, or even practical workshops looking at affordability. Once a set of shared principles is agreed, this could also be applied to snacks and drinks provided by your school outside lunchtime.

Oakmeadow CE Primary and Nursery School in Shropshire got fellow pupils to act as lunch box monitors giving out stars to pupils who had a healthy lunch box. Pupils were given cards to display their stars and take home, along with healthy lunch box ideas for parents. Over the period of two terms lunch boxes got progressively healthier and children learnt useful lessons about healthy food.

> We invite parents and/or community groups into our school to eat with our pupils

Invite parents or community groups to have lunch at your school at least once a term.

Getting started

You can send your invite in the form of a direct letter or a notice in your school newsletter or on your website.

At St Peter's Primary School in East Bridgford, Nottinghamshire, this occasion is used as the basis for a project that links citizenship and PSHE. Year 5 pupils write to a senior citizen penpal to discuss healthy eating and food preferences. The pupils then plan and help their school cook prepare a healthy meal to serve to their pen pals, and the resulting feast has become an annual event.

> We don't use flight trays

Use melamine, plastic or china plates and bowls instead of flight trays. Plastic flight trays may be practical and efficient for caterers but they do not encourage children and young people to develop social skills.

Note: Exemptions to this rule may apply in the case of pupils with special needs or very young pupils (ie aged four and under). The use of disposable plates does not meet our criteria.

Getting started

Melamine plates and bowls offer a light, easily cleaned and practical alternative. For more on this issue, see our briefing *From flight trays to good food culture*, available at www.foodforlife.org.uk

Lydgate Infant School in Sheffield has 348 pupils and switched from flight trays to plates. The school had anticipated the carrying of plates to be a problem and that queuing might be slower, however, neither was an issue. Washing up took longer so extra time had to be provided in the kitchen. Lunchtime staff also needed to alter practices to ensure that changes to general systems such as placing cutlery and water on tables worked.

Food quality and provenance

(delivered in partnership with our caterer)

> We include a range of locally sourced items on our menu

Your caterer should serve items produced (or made with ingredients produced) in the region or adjacent county from at least two of the following categories each week at any one time:

- Fruit
- Vegetables
- Dairy and eggs
- Meat (sausages and burgers can be counted if the meat comes from named farms in the region or adjacent county)
- Fish (fish can be counted if it comes from day boats based in the region or adjacent county)
- Bread (bread can be counted if it is baked in the region or adjacent county)

Highlight these items as 'local' or 'from [the region or county]' on or under the menu, with the caveat 'subject to availability' or 'when in season'.

Note: Be clear where an ingredient is local rather than a whole dish. For instance, say 'Shepherd's pie with local lamb' not 'Local lamb shepherd's pie'.

Getting started

You will probably need to have more than two different locally sourced items on the menu over the year to allow for supply interruptions when some items are not in season. Record any occasions when fewer than two local items are served each week due to a supply interruption – this is fine as long as the interruption is shorter than one month. For practical guidance on sourcing local food, see our briefing *How to source local and organic ingredients*, available at www.foodforlife.org.uk

Eastwood Comprehensive in Nottinghamshire has all its meat and eggs supplied by a local farm. The farm is within walking distance and all the animals are outdoor

reared. It is the same farm that the school uses for its farm links programme and the farmer was once a pupil at the school. Last spring some pupils were able to take part in lambing and calving. They 'adopted' a lamb and a calf and visited regularly to watch them grow and then accompanied them to the abattoir.

> We include a range of certified organic or MSC-certified items on our menu

According to the Government, organic farming tends to deliver greater biodiversity, less pollution, less carbon dioxide emissions, better animal welfare and more local economic activity. The Sustainable Development Commission describes organic farming as the 'gold standard' for sustainable food.

Your caterer should serve certified organic (or Marine Stewardship Council-certified in the case of fish) items from at least two of the following categories on the menu each week at any one time:

- Fruit
- Vegetables
- Dairy and eggs
- Meat
- Fish (fish can be counted if it is organically farmed or MSC-certified wild fish)
- Bread
- Dry goods

Highlight these items as organic or MSC on or under the menu, with the caveat 'subject to availability' or 'when in season'.

Note: Be clear where an ingredient is organic rather than a whole dish. For instance, say 'Fish pie with organic salmon' not 'Organic salmon fish pie'.

Getting started

You may need to have more than two organic or MSC items on the menu over the year to allow for supply interruptions when items are not in season. Record any occasions when fewer than two local items are served

each week due to a supply interruption – this is fine as long as the interruption is shorter than one month.

For practical guidance on sourcing organic food, see our briefing *How to source local and organic ingredients*, available at www.foodforlife.org.uk

> We use poultry, eggs and pork that are produced in line with standards set for the Freedom Food scheme as a welfare minimum or we make sure that at least 10% of our ingredients are from a certified organic source, including organic animal products, and we will reduce the amount of poultry and pork we serve.

Your caterer may source chicken or eggs from free range producers without Freedom Food certification and still comply with this requirement. They may also source pork, bacon, ham and sausages from outdoor-reared or outdoor-bred pigs without Freedom Food certification. Freedom Food is an assurance scheme devised and monitored by the RSPCA with the specific intent of providing assurance of higher animal welfare standards. It is not the same as free range, as some indoor systems are allowed under the Freedom Food standards, though these must have higher standards (e.g. lower stocking densities and environmental enrichments) than under baseline farm assurance.

For chicken meat or eggs to be called 'free range', it must be produced to standards laid down by EU law which specifies that the chickens are provided with access to open-air runs. There is no requirement for an annual inspection, but the Egg Marketing Inspectorate and Trading Standards ensure that any meat or eggs marketed as free range are actually free range. We would encourage caterers to ask for the RSPCA's Freedom Food certification to guarantee an annual inspection of the farm system.

For pigs there is no legal definition of 'free range' and different farms use this phrase to mean different things. The RSPCA and the British Pig Executive are currently working on clearer definitions

for free range pork.

The majority of pigs in the UK are housed indoors, many on concrete floors. Farrowing crates that are used to confine the sow before and after she gives birth to her piglets are widely considered to be of serious welfare concern. The RSPCA's Freedom Food certification is phasing out the use of farrowing crates and currently restricts the length of time the sow can be confined in one. You might also see the terms 'outdoor bred' and 'outdoor reared'. In 'outdoor reared' systems the sows and their piglets spend their lives outside. More common is the term 'outdoor bred' where sows are kept outdoors and farrowing crates are not used. However, after the piglets are weaned they will be kept indoors to be reared for meat. Some indoor systems involve keeping the pigs on concrete or bare slats, so if you are sourcing 'outdoor bred' pork products you should also specify a 'straw-based' system to ensure that piglets live in welfare-friendly environments.

Alternatively you may opt to spend 10% of your ingredient spend over a menu rotation on certified organic ingredients. To comply, you will need to be serving certified organic meat, eggs or dairy products and an item from another of the following categories on the menu each week: fruit, vegetables, fish, bread or dry goods. If you select this alternative option then you must also produce and implement an action plan to reduce the amount of poultry and pork you serve (See the food quality and provenance gold section for further details on the background to this requirement).

Getting started

For further detailed guidance see our briefing *Frequently Asked Questions about animal welfare assurance schemes*, available at www.foodforlife.org.uk

We don't serve fish that is on the Marine Conservation Society 'Fish to Avoid' list

Overfishing has caused one-third of all fishing stocks worldwide to collapse, and scientists are warning that if current trends continue all fish stocks worldwide will collapse within 50 years. Many thousands of dolphins, turtles and albatross are also caught by large drift nets or baited hooks.

Getting started

The Marine Conservation Society 'Fish to Avoid' list is available at www.fishonline.org. Fish to avoid includes Atlantic cod, skate and haddock. To be really sure, you can buy fish certified sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council, which can currently be supplied by Brakes or major supermarkets.

> We display information about the origins of the fresh produce we use

Display the names of the farms and/or local food businesses that supply locally produced fruit, vegetables, meat or dairy products for your school meals, and feature them on your menus, blackboards, flyers, website or newsletters. This will help your pupils and parents identify with and feel proud of your school food sourcing policy. Highlight when produce grown in the school garden is used in your school menu too.

> We make sure that at least one product on our menu or in vending machines meets Fairtrade standards

Fairtrade standards, as guaranteed by the Fairtrade Mark, ensure that disadvantaged producers in the developing world are getting a better deal. Producer organisations receive a minimum price that covers the cost of sustainable production and an extra premium that is invested in social or economic development projects.

Getting started

Fairtrade products that can be easily included on your school menu or in vending machines include bananas, pineapples, rice, quinoa, fruit juice, nuts and snacks, tea and coffee.

Food education

> We have established a cooking club and our pupils are cooking with seasonal, local and organic ingredients

Encourage your school cooking club to use recipes that highlight what is in season each term. Ensure that your pupils are cooking with local and organic ingredients at least once a term.

Getting started

A school cooking club is an excellent way for your school to reinforce the learning from cooking classes in extracurricular time. You can also support learning about food provenance and sustainability, organic growing and farm links by sourcing in-season fruit and vegetables, and some local and organic ingredients. Why not make use of produce grown by pupils in the school garden?

> We ensure pupils in our garden group and/or a class are growing fruit, vegetables and herbs organically

An organic growing area in your school grounds or in the vicinity is a fantastic interactive classroom that can support all curriculum areas.

Getting started

The wider the range of produce grown by your pupils, the more likely it is that they will find a range of fruit and vegetables that they feel motivated to prepare, cook and eat. By giving pupils the opportunity to decide what they would like to grow you will encourage active participation. Your pupils can contribute to the gardening team in lots of different ways, such as by investigating the benefits of organic growing and composting for their health and the environment.

Each class at Haydonleigh Primary School in Wiltshire is given a one square metre plot to grow herbs. They have expanded their gardening activities and transformed a larger piece of land into a mini orchard, wildflower meadow, and 14 vegetable plots with a polytunnel.

> We have produce from our school garden available at least once a term for pupils to eat or cook with

Get your school kitchen, cooking club and/or one or more classes to use the produce grown in your school garden in cooking activities at least once a term, using seasonal recipes.

Getting started

Eating fruit and vegetables that you have grown yourself is a wholly different experience to eating fruit and vegetables that have been served up by others. Making school garden produce available for your pupils to taste and cook with is a great way to give them more of an appetite for healthy fresh produce. Signs and labels can be used to inform the whole school that freshly harvested produce is part of the school lunch that day.

Note: It is important to ensure basic food hygiene rules are observed.

Crondall Primary School in Hampshire makes the best use of their garden produce by using it regularly during cooking lessons, the cooking club and lunches, and the excess is sold in the village shop – to help fund cooking activities.

> Our pupils explore the ethical and environmental issues around food choices and this is linked to changes in our school meals

Over 30% of our climate impact as consumers is due to the production, transport and processing of the food we buy and eat. Topics such as food miles, animal welfare can be used as cross-curricular project work for year groups. This work can also be linked to school meal changes and farm visits.

Getting started

Encourage your pupils to consider how, as consumers, they can make choices that will lessen this impact. Farming also raises a series of important ethical issues that encompass the welfare of animals and a fair deal for food producers. Resources for teachers to support discussion of these issues are available at www.foodforlife.org.uk

Coppice Farm Primary School, in Nottingham holds a Fairtrade Week each year, linked with their curriculum work on a school in Africa with which they are connected.

Pupils spend the week researching fairtrade issues, cooking with Fairtrade products, and in 2009 they designed, decorated and sewed Fairtrade reusable shopping bags. A newsletter keeps parents informed of what the children have been doing, and at the end of the week there is an assembly to which parents and the local community are invited to share their produce.

> One or more of our year groups keep in touch with a local farm throughout the year

Farm visits should be part of a year-round link with a local farm in which farmers keep your pupils updated on what's happening on the farm. Make arrangements for small groups of pupils to visit the farm at different times of the year.

Smaller group visits throughout the year enable pupils to talk at length with the farmer, get a closer look round the

farm and begin to understand the yearly cycle of work on farms.

Getting started

Pupils who visit the farm can report back to the rest of the school – during an assembly perhaps, or by making a display in school. You could communicate with the farmer regularly by email or invite him/her to your school as a guest speaker or to join in your food events for your school community. A school picnic or harvest festival held at the farm would provide an opportunity to bring larger numbers of pupils and community members to the farm.

Docking School in Norfolk consulted on what they would like a visit to an organic farm to include. This was an extremely useful process, highlighting their interest in the people working on the farm and a desire to get a feel for daily life on the farm. Pupils wanted to get involved with practical activities, learn new skills and help the farmer.

They did research prior to their visits, with each of the three participating groups watching a film about animal welfare, finding out about one kind of farm animal, and writing interview questions for one of the farm staff. This meant that they were really engaged and interested in the visit and it had a real sense of purpose.

> We organise at least one annual visit to or from small local food businesses

We know that many children and young people feel little connection with the 'story of food' or with the people who work to produce and process it. Seeing everyday foods such as sausages, pasta, bread, cheese or pressed fruit juice being made in front of them will be a memorable experience.

If your visits involve a small group of pupils they could present their findings back to their class or year group in a lesson or assembly.

Getting started

Small local businesses such as bakers, market stall holders, cheese makers, butchers and farm shops often welcome the opportunity to make links with your school and to demonstrate what they do. If sending all pupils is impractical you could invite them into school to do a presentation, for example in an assembly.

St Peter's Primary School in Nottingham organises for pupil and parent groups to visit Gonalston Farm Shop. This local business sources local beef, pork, lamb, chicken and a variety of fish for the lunches at St Peter's. The shop also supplies the school with its own sausages and beef burgers that are made on site.

Key Stage 2 pupils have benefited in many ways from this direct link with Gonalston; visiting the shop for tasting sessions, ranging from seasonal fruit and vegetables to handmade sausages. Alongside tasting sessions, younger pupils have been able to see sausages being made and meat cuts being prepared by the butcher.

Headteacher David Maddison has found that: "Having a genuine relationship with a local farm shop improves the children's knowledge of where food comes from, who produces it and some of the processes by which it is made. This motivates them to eat with more understanding and, in some cases, more daring!"

Community and partnerships

> We hold events to involve parents and/or the wider community in growing and cooking activities

In addition to holding an annual food-themed event, create at least two occasions in which parents and/or the wider community can get involved with cooking and growing. This will give your pupils the opportunity to celebrate their achievements and share the benefits with the wider community, inspiring them to get involved in cooking and growing activities. It may be that you can integrate cooking and growing with existing school activities such as parents evening, Christmas celebrations or sports days.

Getting started

Events can include all sorts of activities, from taster sessions at parents' evenings and 'open days' hosted by your cooking or gardening clubs to cooking demonstrations by local chefs.

Pupils at Devonshire Primary School in London grow their own herbs in window boxes. They organised an event for families to make and plant window boxes for home.

> We actively encourage our pupils and their parents to grow and cook their own produce at home

Growing fruit and vegetables and cooking at home can be rewarding for all involved. It is also an affordable way for families to have a variety of fresh fruit and vegetables available to them to count towards their five-a-day.

Encourage your pupils to get involved with their families in cooking and growing at home through simple projects for evenings or holidays, or by providing recipes and seeds or seedlings for pupils to take home.

Getting started

You could involve pupils in cooking projects by encouraging them to try out simple recipes at home with their parents, using affordable or school-supplied ingredients; they could then bring in photographs or the dish itself to school the following day. Growing projects could involve taking seeds home to germinate, and bringing the seedlings back into school to plant out in pots or in your school garden.

St Andrew's in Shifnal suggests keeping things simple and starting small; however, pupils' efforts in this school were such a success that a purposely small start soon snowballed.

Headteacher Adrian Marsh says: "Children started a seed diary; they grew the seeds at home and reported back on their progress. Many parents are now growing all kinds of vegetables they wouldn't have had the confidence to before. Of course, they wanted to know what they could do with the produce, so the logical next step was to provide recipes, and this grew into holding community cooking sessions."

> Our pupils share Food for Life Partnership learning with local schools, the wider community and other partners

Support and encourage your pupils to share their learning around cooking, growing, farming and food choices. It is a very powerful experience and helps develop important leadership skills.

Getting started

This may involve:

- Pupils showing visitors from other schools or the community around your school.
- Pupils demonstrating some of their new skills to adult groups or other pupils.

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- Pupils leading or getting involved in presentations to others in and outside school.
 - Offering pupil-led presentations at local Healthy Schools/Sustainable Schools events.
 - Supporting pupil-led assemblies for neighbouring schools or feeder primaries.
 - Pupils inviting a small number of staff and pupils to accompany them on their farm visits.

At a Continuous Professional Development day for secondary school teachers in Wakefield on sustainable food and farm visits, students at St Wilfrid's Catholic High School gave a presentation about their recent farm visits.

The science teacher involved in organising the farm visits gave a presentation about how the day was organised and how the farm links fit into the school curriculum. The teacher and students also discussed the wider Food for Life Partnership work that has been taking place at their school.

Lee Dawson, a member of the SNAG, said: "Since my school got involved with the Food for Life Partnership, I have learnt so much about where food comes from and how it is produced. I now understand and appreciate what a good food culture is – not just whether the food I eat is healthy or not, but also where it comes from and its impact on the environment. I've had some great opportunities to speak about our school, food and the Food for Life Partnership and that has been really beneficial for my personal development. I've gained a lot of confidence through public speaking."

Gold for transforming food culture

Food leadership and school food culture

> Our pupils all have the opportunity to sit down to lunch every day

Ideally pupils should have at least 30 minutes when they can sit down and eat their lunch. This gives pupils the opportunity for both social interaction and good eating habits.

Getting started

Limited seating capacity can be a problem, particularly in secondary schools. Creative timetabling is a good way to ensure that all your pupils have an opportunity to sit down for a sufficient period at lunchtime. Some schools have found staggering lunch periods for different year groups or opening multiple serving points or cashless systems has successfully reduced queuing times.

> Take up of school meals is over 60% OR has increased by more than 20% since we enrolled with the Food for Life Partnership

Measure your meal take up as an average over a term or half term. To demonstrate an increase of over 20%, an additional 20% or more of the whole pupil population will be taking school meals, compared to the average for the term or half term in which your school enrolled OR the same term or half term in the previous year. In order to retain a Gold Mark you will need to demonstrate that this take up has been sustained at the two-year review.

Calculation example

School role:	200
Take up at enrolment:	75 pupils had school meals every day
Percentage of take up at enrolment:	37.5%
Take up now:	100 pupils have school meals per day
Percentage of take up now:	50%

To work out the 25 meals increase from enrolment as a percentage:

Divide the difference between the take up figures (25) by the original take up (75) $\times 100 =$ your percentage take up ie $\frac{25}{75} \times 100 = 33\%$ increase in school meal take up.

Getting started

Useful strategies for increasing take up of school meals include:

- Allowing pupils who eat packed lunches and pupils having school dinners to sit and eat together. Pupils say they are keen to spend the lunch period with friends, so they may not want to eat school dinners if their friends with packed lunches sit elsewhere.
- Consulting with your pupils and parents on menu improvements.
- Holding food taster evenings where parents can try out new dishes or celebrate new menus, and inviting parents to join children on various occasions for school lunches.
- Holding school dinner promotions at events for new joiners and their parents.
- Making office staff time available to help families apply for school dinners.

At Penair School in Truro the uptake of lunches has grown from 30 to 400 in just two years. Catering Manager John Rankin uses local ingredients such as fish that is locally caught in St Ives and Newlyn, and fresh produce from around the county. Headteacher Barbara Vann says this is due to careful budgeting: "John keeps costs down by sourcing locally as much as possible. We are not cross-subsidising, so the service has to break even."

> We are working with our caterer to reduce and manage food waste

Approximately one-third of food grown for human consumption in the UK ends up in the rubbish bin. At least half of this is edible, and much of the other half could be more usefully composted. In the UK, the vast majority of our food waste ends up in landfill; as the food rots it produces methane, one of the most potent greenhouse gases. Food waste also represents a waste of money that could instead be invested in better quality ingredients.

Getting started

Work with your caterer to monitor food waste and adopt ideas such as:

- A pre-ordering system to ensure the correct number of covers will be served.
- A consultation process with your pupils and parents on menus, ensuring revisions are carried out.
- In primary schools, train your lunchtime supervisors to encourage and reward pupils who clear their plates.
- Compost appropriate food waste from your school meals.

Food quality and provenance

(delivered in partnership with our caterer)

> We make sure at least 30% of the ingredients we use are from a certified organic or MSC-certified source

According to the Government, organic farming tends to deliver greater biodiversity, less pollution, less carbon dioxide emissions, better animal welfare and more local economic activity. The Sustainable Development Commission describes organic farming as the 'gold standard' for sustainable food. Overfishing has caused one-third of all fish stocks worldwide to collapse, and scientists are warning that if current trends continue all fish stocks worldwide will collapse within 50 years.

Aim to spend at least 30% of your ingredient spend over a menu rotation on certified organic or MSC-certified ingredients. Fish can be counted towards the 30% target if it is organically farmed or MSC-certified wild fish.

Getting started

The MSC Fish & Kids programme is helping to make MSC-certified sustainable fish products available to schools. For more advice go to www.fishandkids.org

At first glance this is often viewed as very challenging by many caterers and schools. However, once you achieve Bronze and Silver, the jump to Gold is very attainable. Shropshire Local Authority school meal provider, Shire Services, is currently serving Silver standard primary menus and is now going for Gold.

Bill Campbell of Shire Services says: "If you are careful about how you structure your menu and work closely with your current suppliers it is quite easy to use organic food without it costing too much. Our approach has been to use organic products with a long shelf life such as rice, then we moved onto local organic vegetables and some dairy

such as yogurts. MSC fish hasn't been difficult to procure either and is readily available from most suppliers."

> We source at least 50% of our ingredients locally

Aim to spend at least 50% of your total ingredient budget over a menu rotation on locally sourced ingredients. To count as locally sourced, ingredients should be bought and produced within your region or any adjacent county/local authority that falls outside your region. For instance, a school or caterer in Dorset could source ingredients from anywhere in the South West and also from Hampshire. If you are unsure which region you are in visit our website www.foodforlife.org.uk

Getting started

When making sourcing decisions consider the following questions:

- Do you know on which farm the food was produced?
- Is the food being produced, processed and packed as close as possible?
- Can you be confident that the food is produced in a way that respects the environment and animal welfare? Is the producer happy for you to visit to make sure?
- Can you be confident that your payment will benefit the local economy? Have you taken opportunities to source direct from local producers?

Note: Any of these considerations may be accepted as a valid justification for counting produce sourced a limited distance outside your region or adjacent county towards the 50% target.

> We make sure that certified organic meat, dairy products or eggs feature on our menu as animal welfare best practice

For climate change, health and animal welfare reasons, it is desirable that as a society we shift towards eating less but better quality meat. All animals on organic farms live in free-range systems and are encouraged to roam

outdoors and express their natural behaviour. According to leading animal welfare organisation, Compassion in World Farming, organic farming has the potential to offer the very highest standards of animal welfare, and the Soil Association's welfare standards are industry benchmarks.

Include organic meat, milk, cheese, yogurt or eggs on your school menu at least once a week.

> We are taking steps to increase the take up of non-meat dishes and to promote a balanced, sustainable diet

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, meat consumption accounts for 18% of global greenhouse gas emissions. This is due to methane emissions from cattle and forest clearance to grow animal feed for intensive farming, as well as the nitrous oxide emissions from fertiliser used to grow this feed. Switching to a more plant-based diet and eating less but better quality meat would make our diets more climate-friendly.

The World Health Organisation and World Cancer Research Fund also recommend eating meat in moderation, while eating more fruit, vegetables and starchy wholefoods, to reduce saturated fat consumption and to minimise bowel cancer risk.

Serving less meat will enable you to invest in better quality for pupils e.g. free range or organic meat.

Getting started

Steps that can be taken to familiarise your pupils with some non-meat dishes as part of a balanced diet include:

- Trialling meat-free days.
 - Making popular vegetable-based dishes the main dish of the day, alongside less popular dishes.
 - Setting targets for increasing the number of vegetarian covers served.
 - Reducing meat portion sizes within nutritionally-balanced recipes.
-

Food education

> We are committed to providing a minimum of 12 hours of cooking lessons a year by 2011 for all our pupils up to and including key stage 3

According to the Royal Society for Public Health young people have a strong desire to learn cookery skills. However, we seem to live in a culture where children and young people's cooking knowledge is limited to putting together meals or snacks from pre-prepared ingredients, and their understanding of the cooking process is largely confined to what a microwave can do in seconds.

Primary schools

Introduce a range of familiar and less familiar ingredients and teach your pupils to make simple nutritious dishes that can form part of healthy meals. Best practice is to teach your pupils basic cooking skills, including safe techniques for the use of sharp knives.

Secondary schools

Best practice is to ensure that your students develop and hone the basics learned during their primary years, so that no student leaves your school without knowledge of the foundation recipes and possesses a repertoire of at least ten nutritious and affordable dishes.

Getting started

Give your pupils every possible opportunity to develop their cooking skills so that they can prepare balanced meals independently and with confidence. Some of our **Food for Life Partnership** primary schools get support from their local secondary school to help them sustain their 12 hours of cooking, or use food-themed events to get all their pupils cooking.

St Edward's CE Primary in Romford, London is developing its curriculum to follow a cross-topic-based approach. The school has written a cooking scheme of work for Years 1-6, taking each topic and planning recipes for each year group,

including some guidelines for preparation. Each year group will have two hours of cookery linked to the topic that they are studying every half term.

> All our pupils have the opportunity to participate in organic food growing during their time at our school

Pupils often benefit from organic food growing becoming an integral part of school life. Not only is food growing an effective way of promoting healthier diets and lifestyles, it can also provide a successful method of engaging any pupils who may be disengaged from classroom learning. It is key to developing pupils' understanding of food provenance and the implications for the environment and their own health.

Primary schools

Make organic growing activities a regular part of your curriculum planning and school life, with opportunities to extend beyond a single module of work in one year group.

Note: we would want to see more than an after-school gardening club open to all pupils.

Secondary schools

Ensure that organic food growing is integrated into all appropriate curriculum areas and provide a growing club that is open to all students. If possible, provide students with their own growing area, no matter how small.

Getting started

While it may not be feasible for all your pupils to be actively involved in organic food growing activity at any one time, all pupils should be given the opportunity to participate at some time during their school lives. Using the school garden as a basis for Science, Maths or English Language classes, or enlisting year groups to help in the harvest and preparation of school garden produce for a soup sale or cooking class, are just a few ways in which you can involve larger numbers.

At St John's CE (VA) Primary, Midsomer Norton, teaching assistants are on an alternate weekly rota to work in the garden with pupils. This ensures that all pupils are given the opportunity to take part. And growing activities bring added benefits. As one teacher comments: "We all know that gardening with kids works – if they grow it they'll eat it!"

> We actively involve our pupils in planning the food growing calendar and maintaining the growing area using organic practices

Putting new skills into practice is empowering and rewarding. Utilising pupils' knowledge of food growing and organic principles in planning the food growing calendar will create a strong sense of pride and ownership.

Give your pupils the opportunity to become actively involved in planning what is to be sown and harvested and when, rather than this being planned on their behalf by a teacher.

Getting started

Pupils will gain maximum benefit if they can experience the full growing cycle and grow a range of seasonal food all year round. Try sowing early and late varieties, succession sowing and providing some protection during the harshest of weather conditions to achieve this.

Using organic practices will allow your pupils to become aware of the detailed and intricate ways in which all living things are connected, and that growing organically means working in harmony with nature.

At Franche Community Primary, Kidderminster, the gardening club decides what is to be grown where each year, make their own crop rotation plan and keeps records of what they have grown. The children choose the seeds, test the soil, identify any pests and make decisions about controlling them.

> Our pupils have the opportunity to take part in a programme of farm-based activities throughout the farming year

Pupils often benefit from doing physical work and learning new practical skills. If this work is linked to the farming calendar, getting involved will enable your pupils to become more connected with the farm and its annual cycle.

Ensure that pupils involved in your farm links programme are actively carrying out a range of tasks around the farm. Hands-on participation is not only rewarding but maximises learning, and in secondary schools this provides an amazing opportunity to introduce students to farming as a career option.

Getting started

Activities might include the following:

- Feeding animals
- Cleaning out animals' housing and putting in clean bedding
- Collecting eggs
- Grinding wheat to make flour
- Milking a cow
- Planting
- Weeding and harvesting crops
- Dry stone walling, stacking wood
- Clearing streams.

Note: Activities of this type involve additional health and safety considerations, but if you ensure that your pupils work in groups that are closely supervised by a farm worker or school staff, then these activities should be no more risky than cookery or woodwork classes in school.

"Farms give an enormous amount of cross-curricular learning, doing something in a field really is a memorable experience that will stay with you for life." Mark Lea, farmer, Greenacres Farm, Shropshire

Community and partnerships

> Our parents and/or the wider community are actively involved in growing and cooking activities in our school

Forging strong school-home and school-community links to help deliver current education policy enriches the curriculum. Pupils' achievements have been shown to be greater where parents and the wider community are actively involved in school life. The **Food for Life Partnership** can support project based learning.

Invite parents and/or community members to help organise, contribute to, and attend growing and cooking activities, and aim to achieve a good level of response to these invitations.

Getting started

Innovative ways of integrating parents, local residents and other members of the community can prove a real challenge. It helps to be both creative and persistent in your efforts. People are often happy to share memories and knowledge with others. Different members of the community can bring food culture to life for pupils, from the older generation telling stories of how they coped with food rationing during the war, to multicultural groups bringing knowledge of the diversity of food that we can grow and cook with in this country.

Children at Haydonleigh Primary School in Swindon have received special support from their grandparents: with their many years of expertise, they have become invaluable supporters of the school's gardening club held each Wednesday.

Grandparent Marion Dowdell says: "My husband and I were both keen to support this project when we heard about it – just for the sheer enjoyment of helping the children. We really look forward to our Wednesdays now."

Teacher Kate Mackinnon, who is leading the gardening activities, says: "All of the crops we pick go to the kitchen, but beforehand they are taken on a tour around the school. The children are really interested to see what has been grown – some of them had very little awareness of how vegetables grew beforehand, but this really brings it to life for them."

> Our parents can buy or collect organic and/or local produce at our school, or we direct them to alternative local outlets

Box schemes are a great way to learn about what's in season, and are often more affordable than buying organic – or even non-organic produce – at the supermarket.

Getting started

You can provide a drop-off point for local organic vegetable box deliveries, giving parents the opportunity to buy when they collect their children from school.

Note: If there is an existing local and organic food retailer or box scheme drop-off point in the community, you should carefully consider whether an additional service is needed.

Hemsworth Arts & Community College in West Yorkshire is launching its own Community Supported Agriculture project in March 2010. The school has 30 hens and a vegetable garden looked after by a group of pupils in the Rural Studies department. The figures needed to set up the project have been provided by a Year 12 Business Studies group who will use the project to build up their coursework portfolio. Currently, the plan is to sell shares of £2 per week to staff and parents, who will receive a box of eggs every two weeks and produce from the school garden in the intervening week.

For more information about Community Supported Agriculture visit www.soilassociation.org.csa.aspx

> Food and cooking education is available in our school to parents and community members out of school hours

Offer classes in practical food education, including cooking, for parents and the wider community at least once a term. You can have a positive influence on your pupils' diets outside school, and influence the health of the wider community, by offering opportunities for parents and community groups to develop cooking or growing skills using your school facilities out of school hours.

Getting started

Some schools have found it useful to develop a cooking resource area in the classroom so members of the community can access recipes and advice during open times. Try linking with your local college which may be able to offer further advice and support for adult learning.

Jacqueline Parks, Head of Hospitality at Cardinal Wiseman High School in Greenford, London has been running cookery evening classes for parents and community members for a number of years. The six-week course is run after school from 6.00–9.30pm and has become so popular that there is now a waiting list, and the school is looking into running the course more frequently. Advertised through the school's newsletter and website, many people are now also signing up through word of mouth.

> We host regular visits about the Food for Life Partnership from other schools and stakeholders

Ideally, these fact-finding visits would involve your pupils, teaching and catering staff and enable local schools and other stakeholders to understand how you have transformed your school food culture using the **Food for Life Partnership** approach and what the benefits have been.

Getting started

This may mean:

- Hosting one-to-one meetings with other headteachers at your school.
- Running small seminars for local schools to explore positive food cultures.
- Giving pupil-led presentations at local Healthy Schools/Sustainable Schools events.
- Supporting pupil-led assemblies for neighbouring schools or feeder primaries.
- Working with your local media to promote **Food for Life Partnership** events, activities and benefits.
- Working with other local flagships schools to host events for local stakeholders.
- Integrating a **Food for Life Partnership** dimension into an existing event.
- Focusing on a particular element of the **Food for Life Partnership**, such as the dining environment or the kitchen garden.
- Hosting workshops about sustainable lifestyles and inviting others to participate in the debate or sign up to local **Food for Life Partnership** activity.

Appointing a nominated school lead for this area of activity can help support visits whilst also giving an opportunity for professional development for a member of staff.

The schools engaged in the Food for Life Partnership tell us they like the award scheme because it is challenging and leads to real and lasting cultural change. However, we understand that each school is different and what works in one place, won't always work in another.

It is still possible to achieve an award if you have:

- Made progression between each award
- Genuinely challenged yourselves to meet criteria and set high expectations
- Demonstrated clear leadership around food in schools, with a senior member of the schools management team championing the agenda
- A good partnership between the school, kitchen, caterers, pupils and the wider community and you tell your external partners about the Food for Life Partnership and food culture.

If you are concerned about whether you have done enough to get an award please give us a call on **0117 314 5180**.

The Food for Life Partnership is a network of schools and communities across England committed to transforming food culture. The Partnership is led by the Soil Association with the Focus on Food Campaign, Garden Organic and the Health Education Trust. Together we work to revolutionise school meals, reconnect young people with where their food comes from and inspire families to cook and grow food.

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Soil Association



Campaign



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