

Food For Life Leicestershire

June 2023 – May 2024

Food for Life Leicestershire has been commissioned by Leicestershire County Council's Public Health team, working with schools enrolled with Food for Life to champion healthy and sustainable food.

Food for Life Leicestershire in numbers

205

schools working towards their Food for Life Award

16

16 schools achieved a Food for Life Foundation Award

8

8 schools renewed their Food for Life Bronze Award

6

6 schools achieved a Food for Life Bronze Award

400

Food for Life Award criteria achieved

73,516

children benefitting from enhanced food education in their school

17

schools achieved criteria B3.2 and B4.1

B3.2 *Our pupils have the opportunity to grow and harvest food and make compost and this is linked to wider learning*

B4.1 *We make efforts to actively engage parents and/or the wider community in our growing and cooking activities*



“

As a result we are going to change the way that we approach food tasting – get children to cut, talk about textures and different varieties of the same food. ”

Attendee of Sensory Food Education Training, 2024



97% of training participants reported an increase in skills, knowledge and confidence

4 Caterers and **2** in-house cooks received one-to-one support to make their school meals healthier and more sustainable

“

Great communication from course leaders and talking to other attendees was very useful and beneficial ”

Attendee of Growing Training, Feb '24

2 month-long national Food for Life campaigns 'Cook and Share' and 'Plant and Share' promoted across Leicestershire

“

I can now run a gardening club in school with better knowledge of what to grow, when and how. ”

Attendee of Growing Training, Feb '24

7 Termly Toolkit emails (helpful guides to support schools achieve their award) were sent to each enrolled school with an average open rate of **32%** and an average click rate of **6%**



10 Plant and Share events and **4** Cook and Share events held by communities, families and organisations in Leicestershire

10 face-to-face training sessions held for **104** staff

To find out more about Food for Life Leicestershire contact Katie Worth, Leicestershire Programme Officer
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BeanMeals

Schools in Leicestershire worked with Food for Life on BeanMeals, a collaborative project funded by UK Research and Innovation and led by some of the top researchers in the country at Oxford University.

Food for Life has been a key partner, working with schools, children and families to encourage cooking and eating meals made with beans. This supports an increase in low fat, low sugar and low salt meals made with healthy plant-based proteins.

Three Leicestershire and three Leicester City schools were supported by Food for Life to take part through:

- A whole school assembly
- School cooks training
- Teacher training on growing, cooking and curriculum links
- Midday supervisor training
- In-class learning about climate impact and plant-based proteins

This support aimed to:

- Enhance food knowledge for children and families
- Enable teachers and senior leadership to discuss healthy diets with bean-based, low fat, salt and sugar and minimally processed meals.
- Encourage a reduction of high fat, salt and sugar and ultra-processed foods in meals beyond the school environment.

The University of Warwick have cultivated two varieties of haricot bean which are suitable for UK growing, reducing food miles as currently most haricot beans are imported from North America.

The two new beans were cooked and served to pupils by school cooks in the six schools. The beans were incorporated into different meals across the school menus in all six schools between February to July 2023. Across the six schools a total of 1900 pupils had the opportunity to try the bean-based meals.



Food for Life Foundation Awards

This brand-new award level recognises the drive and commitment of schools to encourage a culture of good food. It is a great way to celebrate the on-going brilliant Food for Life work happening in Leicestershire schools.

Schools who achieve the Foundation Award have worked diligently to complete 75% of the Bronze Award criteria. The completed criteria covers each of the award pillars: Food Education, Food Leaderships & Culture and Community & Partnerships.

The Foundation awarded schools have also covered Food Quality and ensure that their “menus demonstrate compliance with National standards or guidelines on food and nutrition” (Food for Life Bronze Criteria B1.0). This is yet another milestone in transforming food culture that is acknowledged through the Foundation Award.

The Foundation Award enables flexibility to celebrate all the hard work happening in schools and the efforts to overcome barriers such as school funding, staffing levels and catering challenges.

“We got stuck on the criteria relating to getting rid of the flight trays, this is not something that is possible in our school at this time and has prevented us from obtaining the bronze award, so it's nice to find out that the other work we have been completing has been recognised.”

Natalie Brown, Food for Life lead teacher at The Hall Primary School



EXCITING AWARD NEWS FOR ST CUTHBERT'S

Well done to St Cuthbert's C of E Primary School in Great Glen, who have successfully renewed their Food for Life award!

This large primary school, based in a rural village on the outskirts of Leicester City, enrolled in 2014 and have embedded all areas of Food for Life across the school and into their long-term plans.

St Cuthbert's are the first Leicestershire school to use the new award renewals process. Emma Hamlin, Food for Life Lead, explains: "I would encourage all schools to use this new process to renew their award. It took less than thirty minutes to complete and celebrates and highlights the Food for Life work we are still doing to connect the children in our school with where food comes from."

Since the beginning of their Food for Life Journey the School Nutrition Action Group have worked diligently to continue to improve the dining room environment. By regularly gathering feedback from pupils and parents about school food and working closely with lunchtime staff, small but significant and positive changes are continuously made.

Most recently, the school have altered the organisation of school lunchtimes which, Emma explains, "has made for a much calmer lunchtime environment." This vital work ensures that as many pupils as possible have a healthy and sustainable school meal each day.

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EMMA HAMLIN



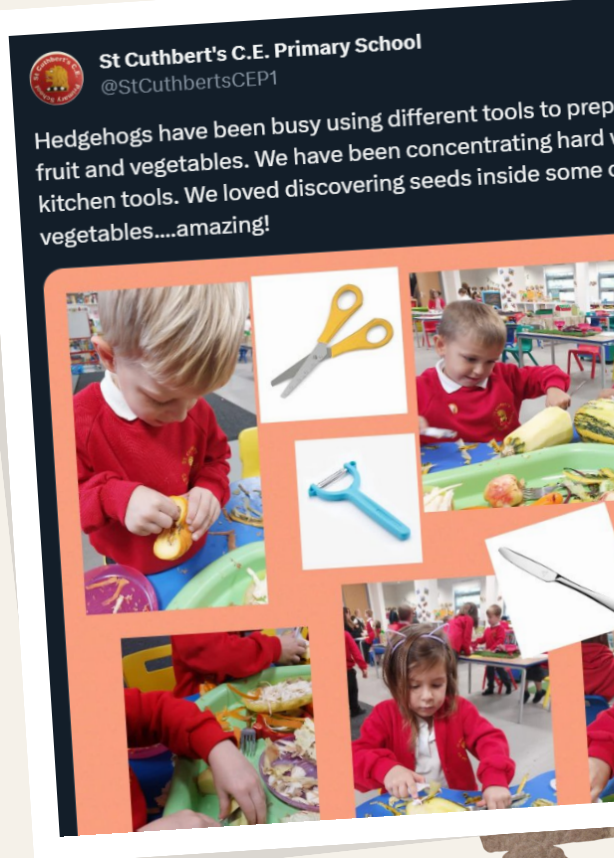
Growing activity is thriving at St Cuthbert's as produce is grown and harvested for the children to use in cooking lessons. Termly plant sales to parents ensure a steady income to invest in seeds and gardening equipment whilst also allowing the school to share what they are growing with the wider school community.

Emma comments that "as part of food technology, all year groups cook and use produce from the garden. We are really very lucky to be able to use it."

The school's food policy details: "in FS, KS1 and KS2, there are many opportunities for pupils to develop knowledge and understanding of healthy lifestyles, including healthy eating patterns and practical skills that are needed to understand where food comes from such as shopping, preparing and cooking food."

The school's Food for Life work influences many areas of the curriculum as well as extra-curricular activities and community events. Recently, the school has used Food for Life resources to connect with local food producer, The Bee Farmer. This enhances their school curriculum, and combined with annual farm visits for EYFS and Year 6, ensures that all pupils at St Cuthbert's have tangible experiences that connects them with where food comes from.

Feeling inspired? Find out about renewing your Food for Life award by emailing fflleicestershire@foodforlife.org.uk



SENSORY FOOD EDUCATION IN LEICESTERSHIRE

Schools across Leicestershire want to know how they can support children to overcome barriers to eating healthy food

Food for Life Leicestershire have delivered 27 Sensory Food Education Training sessions, supporting more than 300 teaching staff, midday supervisors, parents and carers to deliver taste education with children.

Seeing first-hand how exploring food through the senses encourages children to have fun trying fruit and vegetables has given staff and parents space to reflect on how children experience food. Through fun and practical activities, Food for Life have encouraged supportive discussions and idea sharing on how to overcome common barriers to children trying and enjoying new foods.

Participants have been supported to include sensory food education in their cooking curriculum, linking these activities to what's growing in the school garden and applying this in the dining hall to encourage pupils to make healthy choices at lunchtimes and to enjoy eating every part of their nutritious school meals.

Leicestershire schools are now using the TastEd resources as part of their annual food event; hosting parent workshops and allowing children to explore ingredients using their senses before cooking.

Click here to watch a video all about TastEd training in Leicestershire!





ENHANCING CURRICULUM LEARNING THROUGH FARM VISITS



Billesdon Primary School in Leicester recently visited a local farm to learn about farming and the food system, linking it back to the national curriculum at each stage.



Despite squeezed budgets and taking time out of the classroom, the school knew how valuable a visit to the farm would be for their pupils after attending a Food for Life Inspired training session. During this session, school staff were shown how farm visits can connect with the curriculum and were given resources from the Food for Life Learning and Skills Hub to support this.

The school really value their long-standing link with a local farming family, and every spring all pupils are welcomed by farmers Abigail and Andrew.


During the visit, pupils saw how milking works and learnt about the gestation and birth of calves, which linked to their current science topic of life cycles. Later, their mental maths skills were put to the test as pupils enthusiastically worked out the answers to questions like 'on average, how many litres of milk are produced each day by the cows on the farm?'. Nutrition is also discussed when considering the price and value of whole and semi-skimmed milk.

On the way to an arable field, pupils observed a parked tractor and plough up close, which encouraged discussions around historic farming methods compared to now, which linked to their current history topic of the stone age. Andrew and Abigail also shared photos of family ancestors farming on their land from previous generations, an interesting and unique story from the local area.









In the arable field, Andrew told pupils how wheat is sown in 'drills' over acres of fields to grow flour for bread and cereal, explaining that confidence in maths and science is important to become a farmer as you have to work out costs, make measurements and calculate capacity, area, weight and ratios.




Finally, the pupils were shown how lambing sheep are looked after on the farm, again making links to science through observation of different parts of the sheep, such as teeth and feed, and talking about the birth of lambs. The climax of the farm visit was a Ewe going into labour. A pupil even got to demonstrate his farming experience by assisting in birthing a set of twin lambs, to the great delight of his classmates and teaching staff!



In a just short morning visit, this group of KS2 pupils were exposed to so many opportunities to stretch their curriculum learning and to apply their understanding and skills to real life experiences. Although a teacher mentioned that she had brought some worksheets along, she wasn't surprised that they weren't used: "there is so much to see, do and learn. I don't really want to dilute their enthusiasm with a worksheet when we are here."



Emily Le Gross, Food for Life Lead at the school, explains that the success of the visit requires some initial planning: "The KS2 teachers contacted the farmers to give details of their current topics that could link to the farm visit. Each year I liaise with Abigail and Andrew to try to set the date so that there is almost a guarantee that the children will get to see some lambs being born. We are very fortunate to have such a valuable local link."



It is clear that a farm visit can connect children with where their food comes from and provides them with real, tangible and memorial experiences that can enhance curriculum learning.

